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THE

Theological and Miscellaneous WORKS

OF

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S. &c.

WITH

NOTES, BY THE EDITOR.

VOLUME XVIII.

Containing

DEFENCES

OF

THE HISTORY OF THE CORRUPTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY,

IN REPLY TO DR. HORSLEY AND MR. BADCOCK,

1783—1787:

AND

Defences of Unitarianism,

1786, 1787.

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CONTENTS

OF THE EIGHTEENTH VOLUME.

Defences

OF THE

HISTORY OF THE CORRUPTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY,

In Reply to Dr. Horsley and Mr. Badcock, 1783—1787.

A REPLY TO THE ANIMADVERSIONS ON THE HISTORY OF THE CORRUPTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE MONTHLY REVIEW FOR JUNE, 1783.

	Page
PREFACE	3
OF THE OLDEST OPINIONS CONCERNING CHRIST.	
INTRODUCTION	8
Sect. I. Of the Nazarenes, Ebionites, and Alogi	9
II. Of the Inference from Hegesippus	12
III. Of what may be inferred from Justin Martyr, concerning the State of Opinions in his Time	16
IV. Of the Quotation from Eusebius, and Tertullian's Account of the ancient Unitarians more particularly considered	20
V. Of my being charged with advancing that Justin Martyr was the First who started the Notion of Christ's Pre-existence	25
VI. Of the Doctrine of the Miraculous Conception	30
VII. Miscellaneous Articles	32
Conclusion	34
LETTERS TO DR. HORSLEY.	
PREFACE	38
An Introductory Letter	47
Letter I. Of the Argument from the Writings of the Apostles and the Apostolical Fathers	51
II. Of the Distinction between the Ebionites and the Nazarenes	55
III. That the Primitive Unitarians were not considered as Heretics	61
IV. Of the Inference that may be drawn from the Passage of Athanasius, concerning the Opinion of the early Jewish Christians, relating to Christ	69

838362

Letter — Page

V. An Argument for the late Origin of the Doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, from the Difficulty of tracing the Time in which it was first divulged - 80
VI. Of the Personification of the Logos - - - 86
VII. Considerations relating to the Doctrine of the Trinity 92
VIII. Miscellaneous Articles - - - - 107
The concluding Letter - - - - 112

REMARKS ON THE ARTICLE IN THE MONTHLY REVIEW FOR SEPTEMBER, 1783 - - - - 117

REMARKS ON THE MONTHLY REVIEW OF THE LETTERS TO DR. HORSLEY.

Preface - - - - - - 125
Introduction - - - - - - 127

Sect.
I. Of the Omission of the Sentence in Justin Martyr - 128
II. Of the Creed of Tertullian - - - - 133
III. Miscellaneous Articles - - - - 135
The Conclusion - - - - - 137

LETTERS TO DR. HORSLEY. PART II.

Preface - - - - - - 143
I. The Introduction - - - - - 154
II. Of the Doctrine of the first Ages concerning the Person of Christ - - - - 157
III. Of the Nazarenes and Ebionites - - - 162
IV. Of the supposed Orthodox Jewish Church at Jerusalem, and of the Veracity of Origen - - 175
V. Of Heresy in the earliest Times - - - 181
VI. Of the Sentiments of Justin Martyr, Irenæus, and Clemens Alexandrinus, concerning Heresy - 186
VII. Of the State of Heresy in the Time of Tertullian - 190
VIII. Of Origen's Idea of Heresy - - - 196
IX. Of the light in which the Unitarians were considered in later Ages, and of the State of the common People at all times - - - - 200
X. Of the Quotation from Athanasius - - - 205
XI. Of the Time when Christ began to be considered as God, and the Opinion of the Ancient and Modern Jews with respect to the Messiah - - 213
XII. Of the Personification of the Logos - - 225
XIII. Considerations relating to the Doctrine of the Trinity 230
XIV. Of Prayer to Christ - - - - 242
XV. Of the Unitarian Principles with respect to Mahometanism and Infidelity - - - - 245
XVI. Of Bishop Bull's Defence of damnatory Clauses - 251
XVII. Of the Light in which the Dissenters are considered by the Archdeacon of St. Alban's, and of the Penalties to which the Unitarians among them are subject - - - - - 253

Letter — Page

XVIII. Of the Charge of wilful Misrepresentation, &c. - 261
XIX. Miscellaneous Articles, and the Conclusion - 265

LETTERS TO Dr. HORSLEY. PART III.

Preface - - - - - - 275
An Introductory Letter - - - - 277
I. Of the Veracity of Origen - - - - 278
II. General Observations relating to the supposed Orthodox Church of Jewish Christians at Jerusalem after the Time of Adrian - - - 285
III. Of the Testimony of Epiphanius to the Existence of a Church of Orthodox Jewish Christians at Jerusalem after the Time of Adrian - - 288
IV. Of the Evidence from Jerome in favour of the Existence of a Church of Orthodox Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, after the Time of Adrian - - 291
V. Of the Miraculous Conception - - - 296
VI. Miscellaneous Articles - - - - 299

STRICTURES ON Mr. HOWES's OBSERVATIONS ON BOOKS 310

DEFENCES OF UNITARIANISM, 1786, 1787.

DEFENCES OF UNITARIANISM FOR THE YEAR 1786.

Preface - - - - - - 317

LETTERS TO DR. HORNE, DEAN OF CANTERBURY.

I. Introduction; and of the Charge of Ignorance or Insincerity in the Defenders of the Doctrine of the Trinity - - - - - - 322
II. Of the Argument from Antiquity, and of Dr. Horsley's Services with respect to it - - - 326
III. Of the Interference of Civil Power in Matters of Religion - - - - - 332
IV. Of some particular Arguments for the Doctrine of the Trinity - - - - - 336
V. Miscellaneous Articles, and Conclusion - - 342

LETTERS TO THE YOUNG MEN WHO ARE IN A COURSE OF EDUCATION FOR THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY AT THE UNIVERSITIES OF OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE.

I. Of Subscription to Articles of Faith - - 345
II. Of the Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity - 349
III. Of the Difficulties attending an open Acknowledgment of Truth - - - - - 352
IV. Animadversions on Dr. Purkis's Sermon - - 356
1. Of the Influence of Philosophy on Religion - 357
2 Of Mysteries in Religion - - - 358
3. Of Toleration - - - - - 359

Letter — Page

4. Of perverting the Language of the Scriptures - 360
5. Of Materialism, and the Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity - - - - 361

V. Of Mr. Jones's Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity - 365

LETTERS TO THE REV. DR. PRICE.

I. Introductory - - - - - 370
II. Of the Nature and antecedent Probability of the Arian Hypothesis, with the Causes of Attachment to it - 373
III. Of the Creation of Matter by the Father, and the Formation of it by the Son, and other Considerations attending the Idea of a finite and imperfect Creator 378
IV. Considerations relating to the Origin and History of the Arian Doctrine. Of Christ not being the Object of Prayer, and of the Claim of Arians to the Appellation of Unitarians - - - - 381
V. Of the Proof from the Scriptures of the Creation of the World by Christ - - - - - 385
VI. Of the Argument for the pre-existent Dignity of Christ from his working Miracles - - - 389
VII. Of the Argument for the pre-existent Dignity of Christ, from his being supposed to have raised himself from the Dead, and from his voluntarily dismissing his Spirit when he died - - - - 392
VIII. Of the Argument for the pre-existent Dignity of Christ, from particular Passages of Scripture supposed to assert, or to imply it - - - - 395
IX. Of the Argument for the superior Nature of Christ from his raising the Dead, and judging the World - 398
X. Of the Hypothesis which makes Christ to be a mere Man, naturally as fallible and as peccable as other Men - - - - - - 403
XI. Of the Design of Christ's Mission - - - 407
XII. The Conclusion - - - - - 411

A LETTER TO THE REV. MR. PARKHURST 416

DEFENCES OF UNITARIANISM FOR THE YEAR 1787.

Preface - - - - - - 425

LETTERS TO THE REV. DR. GEDDES.

I. Of the Doctrine of the Scriptures, and that of the Apostolical Fathers - - - - 428
II. Of the Nicene Council - - - - 432
III. Of the State of Unitarianism in the Primitive Times - 436
IV. Of the Degree of Christ's Divinity, and the Conclusion 442

Letter Page

LETTERS TO THE REV. DR. PRICE.

I. Of the Influence of the Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity on that concerning the Person of Christ - 446
II. Of the Propriety of praying to Christ on Arian Principles - - - - - - - 448
III. Of the Silence of the three first Evangelists concerning the Doctrine of the Incarnation, and of the Doctrine of the primitive Ages of Christianity - - 451
IV. Of Arguments from particular Texts, and those drawn from the Reason of Things; and of the Connexion between any Opinion concerning the Person of Christ and the Belief of Christianity in general - 456
V. Of the Meaning of John vi. 62, and of Christ divesting himself of the Power of working Miracles - 459
VI. Of the Influence of Prejudice and Imagination in interpreting Scripture - - - - - 463
VII. Of the Mosaic History of the Fall of Man, and the Conclusion - - - - - - 466

LETTERS TO THE CANDIDATES FOR ORDERS IN THE TWO UNIVERSITIES OF OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE.

I. Of Mr. Howes's uncandid Insinuations - - 468
II. Of the Doctrine of the Ebionites - - - 473
III. Of the true Meaning of a Passage in Tertullian, and another in Epiphanius, quoted by Mr. Howes - 477
IV. Of Mr. Howes's Charge of a wilful Anachronism in the Age of Plotinus - - - - - - 483
V. Several gross Mistakes of Mr. Howes, with respect to the Tenets of Ancient Sects - - - 486
VI. Of several Publications of less Note, and among them Mr. Madan's - - - - - - 490
VII. Of a Letter addressed to me by an Under-Graduate - 497
VIII. Of Dr. Croft's Bampton Lectures - - - 507

APPENDIX.

No.

I. Arguments from History against the Divinity and Preexistence of Christ; or a Summary View of the Evidence for the Primitive Christians having held the Doctrine of the Simple Humanity of Christ - 513
II. Maxims of Historical Criticism, by which the preceding Articles may be tried - - - - 517
III. Letters from Correspondents - - - 519
IV. Of the Passage in Justin Martyr concerning the Unitarians of his Time - - - - - 521
V. Of the Excommunication of Theodotus by Victor - 524
VI. Of Justin Martyr's Account of the Knowledge of some Christians of low Rank - - - - 526

No. Page

VII. A General View of the Arguments for the Unity of God, and against the Divinity and Pre-existence of Christ; from Reason and from the Scriptures - 527
1. Arguments from Reason against the Trinitarian Hypothesis - - - - - *ib.*
2. Arguments from Reason against the Arian Hypothesis - - - - - 529
3. Arguments against the Trinitarian and the Arian Hypothesis from the Scriptures - 531

VIII. The Different Opinions or Dr. Horsley and Dr. Priestley, briefly stated - - - - - 535

IX. Additions to Letters to Dr. Horsley, Part II., Letter IX. - - - - - - - 538

X. Additions to Letters to Dr. Horsley, Part II., Letter XVII. - - - - - - 540

XI. Reflections on the Present State of Free Inquiry in this Country - - - - - - 541

XII. Animadversions on some Passages in Mr. White's Sermons at the Bampton Lecture - - - 551

XIII. Remarks on Mr. Howes's Discourse on the Abuse of the Talent of Disputation in Religion, particularly as practised by Dr. Priestley, Mr. Gibbon, and others of the modern Sect of Philosophic Christians 562

XIV. Remarks on a Pamphlet entitled "Primitive Candour; or the Moderation of the earlier Fathers towards the Unitarians, the necessary Consequence of the Circumstances of the Times; being an Attempt to estimate the Weight of their Testimony in Behalf of the proper Divinity of Christ" - - - 564

XV. An Addition to the Letters relating to Mr. Howes - 571

DEFENCES

OF THE

HISTORY

OF

The Corruptions of Christianity,

IN REPLY

TO

Dr. HORSLEY and Mr. BADCOCK.

1783—1787.

A

REPLY

TO

THE ANIMADVERSIONS

ON

The History of the Corruptions of Christianity,

IN THE

MONTHLY REVIEW FOR JUNE, 1783;

WITH

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

RELATING TO

THE DOCTRINE OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH,

CONCERNING THE

PERSON OF CHRIST.

Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

MATT. vii. 3.

[*Birmingham*, 1783.]

PREFACE.

I SHALL be censured by many persons for taking this public notice of an *anonymous*, and especially a *periodical* publication; and what I hope to shew is, indeed, *in itself*, unworthy of any notice. But a wise man will consider things not so much as they are in themselves, as according to their power of doing good or harm. Now it cannot be denied that the *Monthly Review* is, in general, a respectable publication of its kind; and from the credit which it has acquired, it has considerable influence; so that as nothing is exempt from plausible misrepresentation, any writer has it in his power, with this advantage, materially to hurt the credit and impede the sale of the most valuable productions.

I am sensible that a writer best consults his *dignity* by

keeping silence on these occasions, and his regard for truth may be satisfied by correcting in a subsequent edition the errors of a former one. But my object, I hope, is not reputation, (I write a great deal too much for that,) but the careful investigation, and the most effectual propagation of truth; and for this purpose, I am willing to lay hold of every fair opportunity of bringing it again and again before the public.

I shall even rejoice in my own mistakes and oversights, if they should be the means of drawing more attention to any valuable subject of inquiry. Every person who writes on any side of the question, helps to keep up that attention, and by this means the truth will, in the end, be a gainer. This, however, is the first, and it will probably be the last time that (if I be now doing wrong) I shall offend in this way.

I have not been without similar provocation to take the same method of redress before: but besides that the objects were of less consequence, the slow but sure decision of time (notwithstanding the *Reviewer* had the advantage of the popular clamour against me) has done me sufficient justice. My *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* being, in my own opinion, as well as that of my friends, of more value than most of my other publications, this piece of justice was thought to be due to it in preference to any of the rest; and the knowledge and ability of the present *Reviewer** makes him a much more formidable, and therefore a more respectable antagonist.

The manner in which this review of my work is conducted, must necessarily give a very unfavourable idea of it to those who have no other source of information concerning it. They must think it to be not only full of the grossest blunders, but even calculated to deceive the reader. It is, moreover, written in a *tone* that cannot fail to impose upon many. I know that it has done so, and I am likewise well aware that the injury I have received does not admit of any adequate redress; since for one person who will see my defence, a hundred will see the accusation only. But I shall have done my duty with respect to the public, and to a work that was sincerely intended to be useful to them, by endeavouring to exhibit to the *few* to whom I may have access, how little there sometimes is in the most specious

* Mr. Badcock. See *infra*, the *Remarks*, &c.; *Familiar Letters*, xxii. P. S.

and the most arrogant reviews of books. This may also put them on their guard with respect to similar reviews of other works; and the judgment of the impartial *few* may, at length, influence the less discerning *many*.

My criticiser, feeling the advantage of his situation, may avail himself of it, and reply* in the same plausible and insufficient manner. However, having done thus much, I think I may be excused from proceeding any farther in this way; and for the future content myself with correcting any real oversights which this, or any other writer, shall convince me that I have made. This I shall certainly do the first proper opportunity; and for this, I am confident, the public, before whom I say it, will give me credit.

As I make this remonstrance under so great disadvantage, I think I may require, that if my critic should not choose to meet me on even ground, that is, in a separate pamphlet, he should, at least, give his name; and indeed he has virtually engaged to do so, by saying, "If Dr. Priestley can fairly acquit himself of every charge of misconstruction and mistake, we will acknowledge the injustice of these animadversions.—And if we are convicted of misconstruction, misrepresentation, or mistake, we *will kiss the rod*."† For it is quibbling with the public to talk of *kissing the rod*, and at the same time intending to remain *anonymous*. And I think he will hardly say, after reading my reply, and recrimination, that he has been guilty of *no* misconstruction, *no* misrepresentation, *no* mistake; not to say that exaggeration of real errors requires acknowledgment, as well as misrepresentations and mistakes. In all these respects, I challenge my critic to be as ingenuous as myself.

It may be said that I ought, at least, to have waited till the review of my work was closed. But I do not know when that will be; and, besides, the *Reviewer* has said, "We shall, in another article, give a general review of Dr. Priestley's work, and leave animadversions to others."‡ I choose, therefore, according to the good old adage, (of which I am seldom unmindful,) not to leave that to the morrow which may as well be done to-day.

What I advance in this publication is merely in my own defence, and without the least intention of hurting the *Monthly Review*. But I must observe, in general, that repeated misrepresentations of works in which the public shall

* Which was done in *Mon. Rev.* LXIX. pp. 215—248.
† *Ibid.* LXVIII. pp. 525, 526. *(P.)*
‡ *Ibid.* p. 526. *(P.)* See *ibid.* LXIX. pp. 89—105.

hereafter discern real merit, notwithstanding such attempts to overbear it, will necessarily bring any publication of the kind into discredit with men of sense and candour.

I will venture to say, that no work of any extent will bear to be treated as this of mine has been, viz. by exhibiting its supposed defects only, without mentioning any one thing with respect to its *object* or *execution* that is praiseworthy, or even right. Had my *History of Electricity* been reviewed in the same captious manner, it might have been with the same effect. I do not charge this writer with any want of *learning* or *ability*. In those respects he may be much my superior, but with a want of that *candour* without which there can be no true judgment of the real value of any work of *man*. And we have no *angels* either to write books or to review them.

The reader will also, I hope, consider, that oversights and mistakes which are venial in the compiler of a large systematical work, are unpardonable in one who voluntarily steps forth with no other view than to criticise and discredit it.

This business will not, I hope, be without some advantage; as, besides the *Additional Observations* it has led me to make, relating to the state of ancient opinions concerning the person of Christ, in this pamphlet, (and to which what there is in it relating to myself, and my own just defence, bears but a small proportion,) it may lead to a fuller discussion of the subject. And I now profess, that in the same full and friendly manner in which I engaged with Dr. Price on the subjects of *Materialism* and *Necessity*, * and with the Bishop of Waterford, † on that of the *Duration of our Saviour's Ministry*, I am ready to enter, with any person of learning and ability, upon the discussion of *the State of Opinions concerning Christ, antecedent to the Council of Nice*. My present ideas on the subject are clearly expressed, Section V. of this pamphlet; but I shall be ready to retract whatever I shall be proved to have advanced too hastily and inconsiderately, and I will heartily join with my opponent in searching it to the bottom. I wish only for a fair and generous antagonist; and this for the sake of keeping close to the serious argument, in which alone the public is interested.

I consider this kind of controversial writing as of singular use, and I reflect upon my former publications of this kind

* See Vol. IV. pp. 5—121. † Dr. Newcome.

with much satisfaction, as containing as free and as full a discussion of several important subjects as was ever given to the public.

I am the more at liberty for this investigation, as Mr. Gibbon has absolutely declined to discuss with me, as I proposed to him, the *Historical Evidences of Christianity;** and Bishop Hurd has not thought proper to take any notice whatever of what I addressed to him on the subject of the Reformation of *Church Establishments.*†

As I find it has been supposed, much to my prejudice, that in my late situation‡ I was engaged as a *party writer*, I shall take this opportunity of saying, that I never wrote a political pamphlet, or a political paragraph all the time that that connexion subsisted, nor was I ever requested so to do. It would have been a violation of the most essential article on which that connexion was formed. *How*, or *why*, it was dissolved, about which there have been many surmises, concerns no persons but the parties themselves. §

Birmingham, July 21, 1783.

* See Vol. XVII. pp. 533—536.

† See Vol. V. pp. 495—504. Bishop Hurd found it easier to bring a railing accusation against theological Reformers than to discuss the merits of any proposed *reformation of Church Establishments.* In the Life of his friend and favourite exemplar, he thus discovers how well he could imitate the *Warburtonian* insolence:

"Next to Infidels professed there was no set of writers he (Bishop *Warburton)* treated with less ceremony than the Socinians; in whom he saw an immoderate presumption, and suspected not a little ill faith.—In short, he regarded Socinianism (the idol of a self-admiring age) as a sort of infidelity in disguise, and as such he gave it no quarter." *Life of Warburton*, 4to. 1794, p. 119.

As a striking contrast, I add a passage with which Bishop Hurd's own bench has supplied us. In a Catalogue of Books of Divinity, annexed to his *Theological Tracts*, 1785, Bishop Watson, having mentioned Dr. Lardner's "Letter on the Logos," immediately subjoins the following reflections:

"*Newton* and *Locke* were esteemed Socinians, *Lardner* was an avowed one; *Clarke* and *Whiston* were declared Arians; *Bull* and *Waterland* were professed Athanasians. Who will take upon him to say that these men were not equal to each other in probity and scriptural knowledge? And if that be admitted, surely we ought to learn no other lesson, from the diversity of their opinions, except that of perfect moderation and good-will towards all those who happen to differ from ourselves. We ought to entertain no other wish, but that every man may be allowed, without loss of fame or fortune, *et sentire quæ velit, et quæ sentiat dicere.* This absolute freedom of inquiry, it is apprehended, is the best way of investigating the sense of Scripture, the most probable mean of producing an uniformity of opinion, and of rendering the gospel dispensation as intelligible to us in the eighteenth century, as, we presume, it was to Christians in the first."

‡ In the family of Lord Shelburne. See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 116.

§ See *ibid.* 131—133.

OF THE

Oldest Opinions concerning Christ.

INTRODUCTION.

In the Preface to my late *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, I observed, that "in a subject so copious as this, I am far from supposing it probable that I have made no mistakes, notwithstanding I have used all the care and precaution that I could. If any such be pointed out to me, whether it be by a friend or an enemy, I shall be glad to avail myself of the intimation, in case there should be a demand for a second edition."*

I now sit down to fulfil this promise, even before that demand be made, that I may give the earliest proof of my attachment to truth, and of my readiness to correct any oversight that I may have been guilty of. But those which I have hitherto been convinced of are so very few, and so very inconsiderable, (not in the least affecting my main object, or any one position or argument of moment in it,) that this early appearance before the public requires an apology, and this is two-fold: first, to answer some plausible charges of much greater errors and imperfections, but chiefly to take this opportunity of advancing some *additional observations* in support of one principal object in my work; which was to produce evidence in favour of the doctrine of the proper and simple humanity of Christ having been the original belief of both the Jewish and Gentile churches.

After an introduction calculated to turn my attempt into ridicule,† the writer of the *Monthly Review* for June 1783, says, "Dr. Priestley's sentiments on this doctrine," (meaning the *Socinian,)* "are well known, and if repetition could enforce conviction, he would long ere now have seen the wishes of his heart accomplished."‡ I do own that I

* Vol. V. pp. 11, 12.

† By applying to it some remarks of *Scultetus*. See *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. pp. 515, 516.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 516. *(P.)*

have no wish nearer to my heart than this, arising from the fullest persuasion, that such, and such only, is the doctrine of the Scriptures concerning Christ; that every thing that has been added to the primitive idea of the nature of Christ, has been derived from the vain imaginations of speculative but inconsiderate men; who did not reflect that the proper glory of Christ is his being the messenger of God, speaking and acting by him; and who, by giving him a divine and super-angelic nature, have raised such difficulties to the reception of the gospel by *Jews*, *Mahometans*, and *Heathens*, as can never be removed but by going back to the primitive faith on this subject.

Disagreeable as this publication must, from the nature of it, be to me, I rejoice that it gives me another opportunity of bearing my testimony to the great and important truth of the proper humanity of Christ, commonly called *Socinianism*, though I am far from considering myself as being, what this writer calls me, *its great advocate.** There is another person who has borne a very different, and a much more powerful kind of testimony to it, than any that I have done; and on this account I shall always honour him as the *first Socinian*, and I will add, *one of the first Christians* of this age and country.†

I shall now proceed to mention all the mistakes with which I have been charged, and shall with great frankness plead *guilty* wherever I do not feel myself innocent.

SECTION I.

Of the Nazarenes, Ebionites, and Alogi.

I am told, that "Toland, the infidel, in his *Nazarenus*, (so well answered by Mosheim,) has laboured to prove that the Nazarenes and Ebionites were the same class of Christians, and the true original believers in Jesus."‡

This piece of *Toland's*§ I do not recollect to have seen, nor have I ever met with *Mosheim's* answer to it;‖

* *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. pp. 515, 516.

† Here, I apprehend, Dr. Priestley alludes to Mr. Lindsey and his eminent sacrifices to Christian principle. See Vol. V. p. 3.

‡ *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 516, *Note* †. *(P.)*

§ "Nazarenus; or Jewish, Gentile or Mahometan Christianity; containing the History of the ancient Gospel of Barnabas, and the modern Gospel of the Mahometans, attributed to the same Apostle.—Also the original Plan of Christianity occasionally explained in the Nazarenes, &c." 1718. See *Gen. Biog. Dict.* XII. pp. 246, 247.

‖ *Mosheim*, not satisfied with answering *Nazarenus*, took occasion, in his *History*,

but the opinion of Mr. Toland that the *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites* were the same people, is maintained by *Le Clerc* and other eminent critics, so that few persons at this time, have, I believe, much doubt on the subject. It must, I think, be right for this obvious reason, viz. that their peculiar opinions are represented by the most respectable authorities as the very same; only some have thought that the *Nazarenes* believed the miraculous conception, and the *Ebionites* not. But *Epiphanius* says he does not know whether the *Nazarenes* believed Christ to be a mere man, or to have had a miraculous conception;* and the *Ebionites* are expressly described both by *Origen* and *Eusebius* as consisting of *two sorts*, one of which held that Christ was the son of Joseph and Mary, and the other that his conception was miraculous.† *Epiphanius* also expressly says, that *Ebion*, (whom he took to be the father of the *Ebionites*,) held the same opinion with the *Nazarenes*.‡ I also think it may be clearly inferred from *Jerome's* epistle to *Austin*, that the *Ebionites*, the *Minei*, and the *Nazarenes*, were all the same people.§

How then have I been so "precipitate," as this writer says I have been, "in concluding that the Nazarenes and Ebionites were the same people"? He says, "We have strong reason to suppose that the early members of both sects differed very considerably in articles of *faith*."‖ I can

to insult the memory of the author, by contrasting "the brutal rusticity and uncouth turn of John Toland, with the amiable elegance and specious refinement" of Lord Shaftesbury. The translator of *Mosheim* condescends to follow the example, denouncing *Toland*, as "that contemptible author." Afterwards he thus endeavours to excite vulgar prejudice; a conduct quite unbecoming a fair historian:

"It is," says Dr. Maclaine, "remarkable, that, according to that maxim of Juvenal, *Nemo repentè fuit turpissimus*, Toland arrived only gradually, and by a progressive motion, at the summit of Infidelity. His first step was Socinianism, which appeared in his book, entitled, *Christianity not Mysterious*." *Eccles. Hist.* C. xvii. Sect. i. *Note f*, IV. p. 248. It is, however, *remarkable*, that those who were properly denominated *Socinians* are mentioned by *Toland* only as objects of censure. In his first Chapter on "The Absurdity and Effects of admitting any real or seeming Contradictions in Religion," he says, (p. 25,) "Though the *Socinians* disown this practice, I am mistaken if either they or the *Arians* can make their notions of a *dignified and Creature-God capable of divine worship*, appear more reasonable than the extravagancies of other sects touching the article of the *Trinity*." See further on *Toland*, especially his character by Archdeacon Blackburne, Vol. X. p. 510.

* *Hær.* xxix. Sect. vii. *Opera*, I. p. 123. (*P.*)

† See *Origen contra Celsum*, L. v. p. 272, in *Matt.*, Tract. xiii. C. xx. *Opera*, II. p. 88; *Eusebii Hist. Eccles.* L. iii. C. xxvii. p. 121. (*P.*) See *Lardner*, VII. pp. 19, 20.

‡ *Hær.* xxx. Sect. i. *Opera*, I. p. 125. (*P.*)

§ Ep. lxxxix. *Opera*, I. p. 684. (*P.*) See Vol. VI., where *Jerome* is quoted at length. *Early Opinions*, B. iii. Ch. viii.

‖ *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 520.

only say that I should be glad to see, and have an opportunity of examining this *strong reason.*

This writer wishes to know "in what part of *Origen's* works" I "find any mention made of the *Nazarenes.*"* I answer, that as he describes the opinions of the *Ebionites* as being the same with those which others ascribe to the *Nazarenes*, he sufficiently appears to have had no idea of any difference between them; but I own I expressed myself rather incorrectly, when I said he *acknowledged* that there was no difference between them.† *Tillemont* says, that Origen seems to have confounded the two sects,‡ so that his expression is pretty nearly the same with my own.

No person, I think, can reflect upon this subject with proper seriousness, without thinking it a little extraordinary, that the *Jewish* Christians, in so early an age as they are spoken of, should be acknowledged to believe nothing either of the divinity, or even of the pre-existence of Christ, if either of those doctrines had been taught them by the apostles. Could they so soon have deserted so important an article of their faith, and so lately *delivered to the Saints;* and, having once believed Christ to be either the Supreme God, or a super-angelic spirit, have, contrary to the general propensity of human nature, which has always been to *aggrandize*, rather than to *degrade*, a Lord and Master, (because it is, in fact, to aggrandize themselves,) come so generally, if not universally, to believe him to be nothing more than a mere man, and even *the Son of Joseph and Mary?*

That the *Alogi* were those *Gentiles* who held the same tenets with the *Ebionites*, or *Nazarenes*, among the *Jews*, is universally acknowledged.§ *Athanasius* represents all the *Jewish* believers as having held that Christ was only a man,‖ and says that they drew the Gentiles into the same opinion; and this is mentioned by him not in controversy, but incidentally, though very much at large. It is, there-

* *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 516, *Note* †.

† "Origen and Epiphanius acknowledge that the Nazarenes and Ebionites were the same people." *History*, 1782, altered according to the author's *corrections*, Vol. V. pp. 16, 17.

‡ *Mémoires*, IV. p. 192. *(P.)* "Origène (*in Cels.* L. ii. p. 56, c.) paroit même avoir confondu ces deux sectes, lorsqu'il dit que les Juifs qui croyoient en J. C. vivoient conformément àl a loi, et etoient appellés Ebionites." *Mem.* Ed. 2, 1701. II. p. 107.

§ See Vol. V. pp. 20, 21, 23.

‖ The *Reviewer* rejoins that these were not "Jewish believers" but "mere Jews;" for which he quotes the *Greek* of Athanasius. *Mon. Rev.* LXIX. p. 234. See *Lardner*, (*Logos*, *Note* 20,) XI. p. 110.

fore, the more worthy of credit; and especially as he himself does not seem to have been aware of the very obvious inference that may be drawn from his concession. Accordingly, it is not denied that these *Alogi* were considered as part of the body of Gentile Christians, without having ever been excommunicated; so that it is plain that they were not deemed heretics. A *heretic*, the apostle Paul says, (*Titus* iii. 10,) was to be rejected "after the first and second admonition," and the early Christians were but too ready to use, and to extend, any direction of this kind.

Let any person at all acquainted with the eager, contentious spirit of those times, and particularly the attention that was universally given to every thing that savoured of *heresy*, think, whether it be at all probable, that if the majority of Christians in those days had held the doctrine of the divinity, or super-angelic nature of Christ, they would have suffered to continue in communion with them, persons who openly denied those favourite doctrines, and whose rise and progress they could easily trace. On the contrary, these early *Unitarian* Christians were not only tolerated, but we find them mentioned with respect, and even apologies are made to them by those who held the doctrine of the *Trinity;* which appears to have shocked these Unitarians very much. But the generality of these Unitarians were what *Tertullian* calls *idiotæ*, *unlearned*,* and therefore we have none of their complaints from themselves.

SECTION II.

Of the inference from Hegesippus.

I HAVE inferred† from the silence of *Hegesippus*, with respect to the *Nazarenes* or *Ebionites*, in his list of heretics, that he, being a Jewish Christian, was one of them; and this is ascribed by my critic, to my "zeal to support a system, at all hazards."‡ This, however, I cannot help thinking to be highly probable. He, being a *Jewish Christian* himself, could not but be well acquainted with the prevailing opinions of the Jewish Christians, the most conspicuous of which, it cannot be denied, was the opinion of Christ's being a mere man. Now can it be supposed that

* See Vol. V. p. 22. † *Ibid.* p. 17.
‡ *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 520. (*P.*)

if he himself had been what is now called an orthodox Christian, that is, a *Trinitarian*, or even an *Arian*, he would have wholly omitted the mention of the *Ebionites* in any pretended list of heretics of his time, had it been ever so short a one, and this consists of no less than eleven articles? Also, can it be supposed that *Eusebius*, who speaks of the *Ebionites* with so much hatred and contempt, would have omitted to copy this article if it had been in the list? And yet my critic says, "How do we know that *the Ebionites* were omitted?"* Their not being inserted in the list by such a person as *Eusebius*, must, I think, satisfy any person, who has no system to support, with respect to this article. A stronger negative argument can hardly be imagined. As to *Hegesippus* himself, we must judge of his feelings and conduct as we should of those of any person at this day in a situation similar to his. Now did any subsequent ecclesiastical historian, or did any modern divine of the orthodox faith, ever omit *Arians* or *Socinians*, or names synonymous to them, (who always were, and still are in the highest degree obnoxious to them,) in a list of heretics?

Had the faith of the early Christians been either that Christ was true and very God, or a super-angelic spirit, the maker of the world, and of all things visible and invisible under God, and had *Hegesippus* himself retained that faith, while the generality, or only any considerable number of his countrymen had departed from it, it could not but have been *upon his mind*, and have excited the same indignation that the opinions of the *Arians* and *Socinians* excite in the minds of those who are called *orthodox* at this day. Nay, in his circumstances, such a defection from that important article of faith, in his own countrymen, after having been so recently taught the contrary by the apostles themselves, whose writings they still had with them, must have excited a much greater degree of surprise and indignation than a similar defection would have occasioned in any other people, or in any later times.

Lastly, *Hegesippus* quoting the same gospel that was in use among the *Ebionites*, might also have been alleged as a presumption that he was one of them.

My opponent says of *Hegesippus*, "It is as remarkable that he should have omitted the Corinthians as the Ebionites."† How differently do we judge of things being *remarkable* or *extraordinary!* I see nothing at all extraordinary in the

* *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 520. (*P.*) † *Ibid.*

omission of the *Cerinthians*, in this list of heretics, by *Hegesippus*, as they were only one branch of the *Gnostics*, several of whom are in his list; and it is not improbable that these Cerinthians, having been one of the earliest branches, might have been very inconsiderable, perhaps extinct in his time. I do not know that they are mentioned by any ancient writer as existing so late as the time of Hegesippus; and as they seem to have been pretty much confined to some parts of *Asia Minor*, and especially *Galatia*, which was very remote from the seat of the *Ebionites*, they might never have extended so far; and therefore he might not have heard much about them. Whereas the Ebionites were at that very time in their full vigour, and though their opinions (being then almost universal in what was called the Catholic church) had not begun to give offence, they were afterwards the object of the most violent hatred to the other Christians, and continued to be so as long as they subsisted.

That *Hegesippus*, though an *Unitarian* himself, should speak as he does of the state of opinions in the several churches which he visited, as then retaining the right faith, is, I think, very natural. The only heresy that disturbed the apostle *John*, and therefore other Jewish Christians in general, was that of the *Gnostics;* and almost all the eleven different kinds of heresies, enumerated by this writer, are probably only different branches of that one great heresy. If, therefore, the churches which he visited were free from *Gnosticism*, he would naturally say that they retained the right faith. For, as to the doctrine of the *personification of the Logos*, held then by *Justin Martyr*, and perhaps a few others, it was not, in its origin, so very alarming a thing; and very probably this plain man had not at all considered its nature and tendency.

He, as an *Unitarian*, believed that all the extraordinary power exerted by Christ was that of the Father, residing in him, and speaking and acting by him; and he might imagine that these philosophizing Christians, men of great name, and a credit to the cause, held in fact the same thing, when they said that this *Logos* of theirs was not the Logos of the *Gnostics*, but that of *John the Evangelist*, or the wisdom and power of God himself; and though this might appear to him as a thing that he could not well understand, he might not think that there was any heresy, or much harm in it. Had he been told (but this he could only have had from inspiration), that this specious personification of the divine *Logos* would, about two centuries afterwards,

end in the doctrine of the perfect equality of the Son with the Father, this plain good man might have been a little startled. *

That *Eusebius* and others should speak of *Hegesippus* " with peculiar respect," (from which my critic argues, that " *Hegesippus* could not possibly have been an Ebionite,") † appears to me nothing extraordinary, though it should have been known to them that he was one; considering that they quote him only as *an Historian;* and supposing, what is very probable, that he did not treat particularly of doctrinal matters, but confined himself to the Acts of the Apostles, and other historical circumstances attending the propagation of the Gospel; especially as he was the only historian of that age, and had always been held in esteem. A man who is once in possession of the general good opinion will not be censured lightly, especially by such men as *Eusebius.* Can it be supposed also that Eusebius, in expressly quoting *ancient authorities* against those who held the opinion of the simple humanity of Christ, would not have cited *Hegesippus* as well as *Irenæus*, *Justin Martyr*, and others, if he could have found any thing in him for his purpose? This may be considered as a proof that there was nothing in that work unfavourable to the doctrine of the *Ebionites.* A negative argument can hardly be stronger than this.

My critic calls the argument for *Hegesippus* being an *Ebionite*, from his omission of the *Ebionites* in his list of Jewish heretics, " *a lame and impotent conclusion:*"‡ and because I insert it in my " Summary View of the Evidence for the primitive Christians holding the Doctrine of the Simple Humanity of Christ;"§ he says, " We are sorry to see a man of such superior qualifications reduced to an expedient so precarious as this!"‖ Let the reader attend to the considerations I have now urged, and say whose conclusion is *lame* and *impotent*, mine, that *Hegesippus* probably was, or his, that he *could not have been* an Ebionite. I shall continue this argument in my *Summary View* till I see much better reason for displacing it.

* " Hegesippus," says *Lardner*, " as we are informed by Eusebius, was originally a Jew, converted to the Christian faith. He is supposed to have been born in the beginning of the second century; and died, according to the Alexandrian Chronicle, in the reign of Commodus. ' He wrote,' says Eusebius, ' a faithful relation of the apostolic preaching in a very plain style.' And in these books, Eusebius says, he mentions his journey to Rome: that in his way he conversed with many bishops: that in all of them he had perceived one and the same doctrine." *Lardner*, II. pp. 140, 141.

† *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 520. (*P.*) ‡ *Ibid.*

§ Vol. V. pp. 505, 506. ‖ *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 521.

SECTION III.

Of what may be inferred from Justin Martyr concerning the State of Opinions in his Time.

My critic says "Our greatest objection lies against Dr. Priestley's representation of the opinions of Justin Martyr. He first translates a passage of that ancient father's writings in equivocal terms, and then draws a conclusion from it in direct opposition to its original design. '*Nor should I be prevailed upon by ever so many who hold that opinion.*'* This Justin is made to say."†

Now I maintain that my translation of the passage, though not *literal*, is *just*, and not in the least *equivocal*, and moreover it is, of the two, less favourable to my own purpose than his translation, viz. *the majority* of Christians; and therefore I could not possibly mean to take any unfair method in drawing my conclusion, whether, on the whole, it be well or ill founded. For certainly the phrase *ever so many*, carries the mind beyond the idea of a bare majority, viz. as nearly as possible to the whole number, leaving as few as any person pleases for the *some persons*, τινες, who are opposed to the *ever so many*, or *majority*, οἱ πλειοι.

Besides, the critic, by considering the whole sentence as a conclusion from *Justin*‡, mistakes the ground of my observation; imagining it is wholly founded on the quotation from that writer, whereas it is in part a probable opinion of *my own*. That the reader may judge for himself I shall here give the sentence entire. "This language has all the appearance of an *apology* for an opinion contrary to the general and prevailing one; as that of the humanity of Christ (at least with the belief of the miraculous conception) probably was in his time."§ The latter part of the sentence is wholly my own; and not an inference from *Justin*, and it is an opinion for which I shall soon give sufficient reason.

It is enough for me if I do not misrepresent my author, by a wrong interpretation of his own words. As to the *ground* or *colour* that there may be for my own observation, the reader must judge between us, and to this I have no objection. And, indeed, I am fully satisfied that the τινες or *some* of *Justin Martyr* were, in fact, the πλειοι, or the majority; and I even think it not improbable, from the

* Vol. V. p. 21.
† *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 521. (*P.*)
‡ *Ibid.* p. 522. (*P.*)
§ Vol. V. p. 22.

complexion of the sentence, that *Justin* might be aware that it might be objected to him, that even the majority of Christians held an opinion different from his; and that with a view to this, he said that he should not be influenced by it, though it should be so.*

Tertullian expressly says that it was the prevailing opinion fifty years after that, and it is well-known that that doctrine kept losing, and not gaining ground, in all that period. According to him, it was held by the *idiotæ*, the common, unlearned Christians, who, he says, are always the majority of believers. †

Besides this direct testimony, the thing is highly probable from other considerations. If this had not been, at least, a very general opinion, it can hardly be supposed that any writer would have spoken of it with so much tenderness and respect as *Justin* has done, considering how very different it was from his own opinion, for which I still think that his language wears a sufficient appearance of an apology. He also seems to intimate some degree of *doubt* with respect to his opinion, when he says that "if he should not be able to prove the *pre-existence* of Christ, the doctrine of his *Messiahship* would not be affected by it."‡ Why should he provide this retreat, if he had no secret suspicion of the ground on which he stood?

If we consider the time in which *Justin* wrote, viz. about A.D. 140, that is, about eighty years after the time of the apostles, and compare with it the account that *Athanasius* gives us of the state of opinions among the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, in their time, we can hardly doubt (whether *Justin Martyr* confesses it or not) that the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ *must* have been the prevailing one in his time. *Athanasius* says that the Jews, meaning the Jewish Christians, were so fully persuaded concerning the simple humanity of their *Messiah*, that the apostles did not choose to inform them, except in an indirect manner, (of which he gives many instances,) that Christ was any thing more than a man,§ and that the *Gentiles* were drawn by the *Jews* into the same opinion.

* "Dr. Priestley's cause derives new strength from the true interpretation of the clause before us, for it contains a *tacit intimation*, that Justin looked upon the whole body of Jewish Christians to be of that opinion, which he was opposing as erroneous and unscriptural; and an EXPRESS DECLARATION, that certain, very many, the MAJORITY, of the Gentile Christians were of the same opinion with them." *Remarks in Vindication of Dr. Priestley*, 1783, quoted in *Mon. Rev.* LXIX. p. 309.

† *Quæ major semper credentium pars est.* (*P.*) See Vol. V. p. 22.

‡ See *ibid.*

§ See *ibid.* p. 19.

Since, therefore, according to this most unexceptionable account, as it was only an *indirect evidence* of the divine or super-angelic nature of Christ that the *Jewish* Christians (by whom the gospel was communicated to the *Gentiles)* were ever favoured with; can it be thought probable, so highly averse as the account itself states the Jews to have been to the idea of any super-human nature in Christ, that they should, by their own reasoning alone on the subject, have generally abandoned their favourite doctrine, in so short a time as fourscore years? Or if, from some most unaccountable cause, and without any person of great authority to lead them into it, (for no such authority can we trace,) they should have abandoned their original and favourite doctrine, is it probable that they would have been so extremely active and successful in the propagation of their new opinion, and withal have found the Gentiles so very pliant as to have been able to induce the generality of them to make the same change, when at the same time they are known to have had but little connexion, and, indeed, but little respect for each other? Is a period of eighty years a space naturally sufficient for these two successive changes?

But, if we take in another well authenticated circumstance, we shall be obliged to reduce this short space (too short as it already is for the purpose) to one still shorter. *Hegesippus*, as explained by *Valesius*, in his notes on *Eusebius's* Ecclesiastical History,* says, that the church of Jerusalem continued a virgin, or free from heresy, till the death of Simeon, who succeeded *James the Just*, that is, till the time of *Trajan*, or about the year 100, or perhaps 110, for his reign began A. D. 98, and ended A. D. 117. Knowing, therefore, from other circumstances, what this purity of Christian faith was, and what *Hegesippus* must have known it to be, we have only the space of 40, or perhaps 30 years for so great a change. So rapid at that particular period must have been that *movement* which we find by experience to be naturally one of the very slowest in the whole system of nature, viz. the revolution of opinions in great bodies of men.† Can it then be thought probable, that, considering the *Jewish* and *Gentile* Christians as one body, the *generality* of them, the οἱ πλειοι should have

* L. iii. C. xxxii. p. 128. (*P.*) See Vol. VI. pp. 129, 130, *Note* ‡.

† This is a *movement* which I could easily shew Mr. Gibbon that he has not much studied, though it behoved him to have given the closest attention to it, preparatory to his account of the overthrow of Paganism by the spread of Christianity. (*P.*)

abandoned the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ, in the time of *Justin Martyr?*

On the contrary, it is certainly not at all improbable that the more learned and philosophical of the Christians, beginning to be ashamed of a crucified man for their Saviour, and firmly believing the doctrine of the pre-existence of all souls, and of their descent into human bodies, should have begun to fancy that Christ must have had some origin superior to that of other men; that this should first of all produce the opinions of the *Gnostics*, who thought that the Christ, who came down from heaven, was quite distinct from the man Jesus, and felt nothing of his pains or sorrows; or that, these opinions being nearly exploded, the generality of Christian teachers, or bishops, (many of whom were educated in the *Platonic* school at *Alexandria*,) should afterwards apply the Platonic doctrine of the *Logos* to the same subject, and that, by their influence, opinions leading to the deification of Christ should gradually gain ground among the common people. But this must have been a work of time, so that the majority of Christians could hardly have been infected with these principles so early as the time of *Justin Martyr*.

The philosophical Christians, however, being the only writers whose works are extant, it is easy to account for our knowing no more than we do of the common people and their opinions, and that we are obliged to collect what we do know concerning them from *incidental circumstances*, as I have endeavoured to do. But these are often the least suspicious intimations of the real state of things. By such circumstances as these, the detail of which may be seen in my *History*, * it will, I think, sufficiently appear, that it was with great difficulty that the generality of Christians were reconciled to the doctrine of the deity of Christ, and that of a *Trinity*, in any form. As *Tertullian* expresses himself, they were at first exceedingly *scandalized* at it, holding firmly to their justly favourite doctrine of the supreme *monarchy of the Father*.† This also sufficiently accounts for the great number of followers which ecclesiastical history gives to every person of learning who avowed the then popular opinion, as *Artemon*, *Noetus*, *Sabellius*, *Paulus Samosatensis*, and *Photinus*.

On the subject of this part of my accusation, which my critic says, is the greatest that he has to bring against me, ‡

* See Vol. V. pp. 40—48. † *Ibid.* p. 41.

‡ "Our greatest objection lies against Dr. Priestley's representation of the opinions of Justin Martyr." *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 521.

I now appeal to the impartial reader, whether, instead of proving me to have misrepresented *Justin Martyr*, he has not misrepresented me, and also whether I have not brought sufficient evidence of the opinion I maintained, viz. that the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ was that which was most generally received in the time of *Justin Martyr;* and of this I shall produce more evidence in the next Section.

SECTION IV.

Of the Quotation from Eusebius; and Tertullian's Account of the Ancient Unitarians, more particularly considered.

My criticiser says, "If Dr. Priestley will turn to Eusebius, and read the chapter with such deliberation as befits an historian writing on subjects of the greatest importance, he will find that his charge of *unfairness* (even if it be true) is not to be applied to *Eusebius*, but to a more *ancient writer*, from whose book the transcript was made which hath so highly offended Dr. Priestley."*

I have reperused this chapter of *Eusebius*, and do not think it quite clear that he is quoting the work of any prior writer in the passage that I have cited ;† for he sometimes only gives an account of the work, and not always express quotations from it; and he seems to me to insert observations of his own, in what he does quote from this anonymous writer; so that, upon the whole, I am of opinion (though I may be mistaken) that *Eusebius* speaks in his own person in what I have quoted from him. However, it is sufficiently evident that he adopts the language, and makes himself answerable for it. Where, then, is the foundation for the tone in which the above remark is delivered?

I acknowledge, however, that I should not have stopped at *Justin Martyr*, but have proceeded to mention the other authorities, quoted either by *Eusebius*, or his author. They are, however, of no sort of weight in the decision of the question, and all of them that are extant I had considered in the course of my work. There is no mention of the divinity of Christ in the first and only authentic epistle of *Clemens*;‡ it being only found in the second and undoubt-

* *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 523. (*P.*) † See Vol. V. pp. 17, 22, 23.

‡ In the second section of this epistle we find the phrase, *the sufferings of God;* [see *Wake*, p. 2;] but this is language so exceedingly shocking and unscriptural, that it is hardly possible to think that it could be used by any writer so near to the time of the apostles; and *Junius*, who was far from having my objection to it, was of opinion that the whole passage was much corrupted, and that instead of παθηματα αυτε, that is, Θεε, we ought to read μαθηματα αυτων. (*P.*)

edly spurious epistle,* as I believe all the learned of this day consider it. *Eusebius* himself says, "It is not so generally received as the former, nor do we know that the ancients have quoted it."† He adds, that there were other later forgeries of writings in his name.

Also, though in some pretty ancient *hymns*, Christ might be mentioned as *God*, yet being poetical compositions, it is most probable that it was only in some figurative and qualified sense, referring to the power and authority with which he was invested by God, as *Moses* is said to have been *a God to Pharoah*. As to the authority of *Pliny*,‡ if he had been told that hymns were sung by Christians in honour of Christ, being himself a Heathen, he would naturally imagine that they were such hymns as had been composed in honour of the Heathen gods, who had been men.§ He would be far from concluding from that circumstance, that Christ was considered by his followers either as the Supreme God, or as a pre-existent spirit, the maker of the world under God.

But I wish to proceed to considerations of more importance relating to this passage of *Eusebius*, and to compare his account of the antiquity of the Christian *Unitarians*, with their own account of themselves, to see which is in itself the more probable. He, or his author, says, that Theodotus, who was condemned by Victor, was the author and parent of that sect; being the first who asserted that Christ was a mere man;‖ and these *Unitarians* are even charged with *certainly knowing* that this was the case, which is directly giving them the lie; and yet this assertion of *Eusebius* is undoutedly false, as appears on the full face of all ecclesiastical history, and, as I have said, it may be proved from *Eusebius* himself.

He certainly knew that *Justin Martyr* had not only mentioned *Unitarians*, but had treated them with much respect; and he speaks of the *Ebionites* as contemporaries

* See Vol. V. p. 23.

† *Eccles. Hist.* L. iii. C. xxxviii. p. 134. (*P.*) See *Wake*, (*Disc.* xvii.,) p. 80.

‡ L. x. *Ep.* xcvii., where, speaking of the practice of the Christians, he says, from the representations of some who had been tempted to apostatize, "Quod essent soliti stato die ante lucem convenire, carmenque Christo, quasi Deo, dicere secum invicem. That they were wont to meet together on a stated day before it was light, and sing among themselves alternately a hymn to Christ, as a God." *Lardner*, VII. pp. 292, 293.

§ "Pliny speaks in his own words, or those of the Christians who were brought before him, Heathen people being willing to deify eminent men. Jesus Christ was such an one, especially in the esteem of Christians. All knew he had died, and that the Christians said he was risen again from the dead, and was ascended to heaven. Heathen people, therefore, might naturally enough say, they worshipped Christ, as a God." *Ibid.* pp. 308, 309.

‖ *Eccles. Hist.* L. v. C. xxviii. p. 252. (*P.*) See Vol. V. p. 23.

of *Cerinthus*, who, according to himself, lived in the time of the apostle *John*.* By his own account, therefore, these *Unitarians*, who believed Christ to be a mere man, were contemporary with the apostle John; who though greatly offended at *heresy*, takes no notice of their opinion being one. Nothing, therefore, can be more contrary to truth or probability, than the account of the origin of the *Unitarians* by *Eusebius*, or his author; and if I be offended at it, is it without a cause? And how can the *Reviewer* doubt of my charge of *unfairness* against Eusebius, or his author, being true? †

Let us now consider the account that these *Unitarians*, according to *Eusebius*, gave of themselves. They are said to have affirmed with confidence, that the apostles taught their doctrine, and that it was preserved till the time of *Victor* or *Zephyrinus*.‡ What they actually said, we do not know, but it could hardly be, that there had been no innovation whatever in the doctrine concerning the person of Christ before the time of *Victor;* because the *Gnostics* are well-known to have been a very numerous sect, consisting of many branches; and before this time *Justin Martyr* and others had published their account of the personification of the *Logos*. It is probable, therefore, that what they really maintained was, that their doctrine was that which was most generally received till that time; and this I think to be highly probable, if not demonstrable.

According to all accounts, the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ was held by the *Jewish* Christians in the time of the apostles. I do not find that any of them are ever expressly said to have held any other doctrine, only some of them believed the miraculous conception. *Athanasius* clearly supposes none of them to have believed that Christ had any nature superior to that of man; and he says that they brought the *Gentiles*, meaning, no doubt, the generality of them, into the same opinion.§ This, then, may fairly be supposed to have been the state of things at the time that *John* wrote his first epistle, which was about the year 80, when it is plain from his own writings there was no opinion among Christians that gave him any alarm, besides that of the *Gnostics*.

Taking it then for granted, that the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ was nearly, at least, universal in the

* *Eccles. Hist.* L. iii. C. xxvii. xxviii. p. 121, &c. (*P.*)

† As to the *very early date* of this anonymous piece, see *Lardner*, who refers it to the year 212. *Credibility*, III. p. 36. (*P.*) *Works*, II. p. 380.

‡ See Vol. V. p. 22. § See *supra*, p. 11.

year 80, is it at all probable, that it could have ceased to have been the prevailing doctrine before the time of *Victor*, about the year 200? Causes which tended to produce the opinion of the deity of Christ operated, no doubt, very powerfully; but still it cannot be thought probable, that they could have produced so great an effect in the space of little more than one century.

Another, and no inconsiderable argument in favour of the antiquity of the proper *Unitarian* doctrine among Christians, may be drawn from the *rank* and *condition* of those who held it in the time of *Tertullian*, who lived about the time of *Victor*. He calls them *simplices et idiotæ*, that is, *common or unlearned people*,* and such persons are certainly most likely to retain old opinions, and are always far less apt to *innovate* than the *learned;* because they are far less apt to speculate. Whenever we endeavour to trace the oldest opinions in any country, we always inquire among the *idiotæ*, the common people; and if they believe one thing, and the learned another, we may conclude with certainty, that, which ever of them be *true*, or the more probable, those of the common people were the more *ancient*, and those of the learned and speculative the more novel of the two.

In most cases the more novel opinions are more likely to be true, considering the gradual spread of knowledge, and the general prevalence of prejudice and error; but in some cases the probability is on the side of the more ancient opinions; and it is evidently so in this. The true doctrine concerning the person of Christ must be allowed to have been held by the apostles. They, no doubt, knew whether their Master was only a man like themselves, or their Maker. Their immediate disciples would receive and maintain the same doctrine that they held; and it must have been some time before any other could have been introduced, and have spread to any extent, and especially before it could have become the prevailing opinion. We naturally, therefore, look for the *genuine* doctrine of Christianity concerning the person of Christ, among those who, from their condition and circumstances, were most likely to maintain the *old* opinion, rather than those who were most apt to receive a new one. Surely, then, we have a better chance of finding the truth on this subject among these *idiotæ*, the common and unlearned people, than with such men as *Justin Martyr*,

* See *supra*, p. 12.

who had been a Heathen philosopher, *Irenæus*, or any other of the learned and speculative Christians of the same age.

On the contrary, supposing the Christian religion to have been gradually corrupted, and that, in a long course of time, the corrupt doctrine should become the most prevalent among the common people, the reformation of it by the recovery of the genuine doctrine is naturally to be looked for among the learned and the inquisitive, who in all cases will be the innovators. This is remarkably the case in the present state of things. The common people in the *Roman Catholic* countries are bigots to the old established faith, while the learned are moderate, and almost Protestants. In Protestant countries the common people still adhere most strongly to the doctrines of their ancestors, or those which prevailed about the time of the Reformation, while the learned are every where receding farther from them; they being more inquisitive, and more enlightened than the uninquiring vulgar. But still, if any man should propose simply to inquire what were the opinions most generally received in this country a century ago, (which was about the space that intervened between *Victor* and the time of the apostles,) we should think him very absurd, if he should look for them among the learned, rather than among the common people. We have experience enough of the difficulty with which the bulk of the common people are brought to relinquish the faith of their ancestors.

Is it, then, at all probable that when the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ is acknowledged to have been held by the *idiotæ*, or *common people*, and who are expressly said to have been the *greater part* of the believers, *(major credentium pars,)* this should not have been the general opinion a century before that time, but, on the contrary, that of the deity of Christ, which was held by *Tertullian*, and other learned Christians; and who speak of the common people as being shocked *(expavescunt)** at their doctrine? Sufficient cause may be assigned why the learned in that age should be inclined to adopt any opinion which would advance the personal dignity of their Master, and the same cause would produce the same effect among the common people, but it would be more slowly, and require more time, as appears to have been the fact.

Let any person of common sense then judge between

* See Vol. V. p. 41, *Note* †.

these ancient *Unitarians*, with respect to the probable account of their origin and antiquity, and *Eusebius*, or his author.

That *Eusebius* himself should take so violent a part as he always does against these ancient *Unitarians*, is not difficult to be accounted for. He himself was strongly suspected of *Arianism*, at a time in which the *Athanasian* doctrine was most prevalent, and though a learned man, he was not of the firmest tone of mind. In these circumstances, he would naturally make the most of such pretensions to orthodoxy as he had, and would be inclined to shew his zeal by invectives against those who were more heretical than himself. This we see illustrated every day. This was the cause why many of the Reformers from Popery joined with the Papists in the persecution of those who were desirous of carrying the Reformation a little farther than themselves. This might in some measure contribute to produce the zeal of the *Calvinists* against the *Arminians*, that of the *Arminians* against the *Arians*, that of the *Arians* against the *Socinians*, and that of *Socinus* himself against *Francis David*.*

SECTION V.

Of my being charged with advancing that Justin Martyr was the first who started the Notion of Christ's Pre-existence.

Another heavy charge advanced against me is, that I have asserted that "the notion of the pre-existence of Christ cannot be traced any higher" than "Justin Martyr."† Now this is to all intents and purposes a mis-quotation; that part of the sentence which was necessary to give the true sense of what is quoted being omitted. It must, therefore, necessarily mislead the reader; and, independently of that, it is a manifest misrepresentation of my opinion, not only simply mentioned, but frequently urged, and enlarged upon in the course of the work.

I have nowhere said that *simple pre-existence* was never ascribed to Jesus Christ before *Justin Martyr*. I must have been a child in ecclesiastical history, and shamefully inconsistent with myself, if I had said any such thing. The doctrine of the pre-existence was certainly that of the *Gnostics* in the time of the apostles themselves, and is always represented

* See Vol. X. pp. 355—357.
† *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 524. (*P.*)

by me as such. What I say is, that "we find nothing like *divinity* ascribed to Christ before Justin Martyr;"* and though, in one particular sentence, I mentioned *pre-existence*, as what we cannot with certainty trace any higher, it is in conjunction with *divinity* and not *separately*, as it is here exhibited. The whole sentence is as follows: "Whether Justin Martyr was the very first who started the notion of the pre-existence of Christ, and of his super-angelic or divine nature, is not certain, but we are not able to trace it any higher."† Had the disjunctive *or* been used instead of *and*, (which would have implied that neither the opinion of the divinity, nor that of the pre-existence of Christ, was prior to *Justin*,) a reader of common sense and candour would have seen that it must have been misprinted. My reference to both the opinions by the pronoun *it*, which is in the singular number, sufficiently shews that, however improper and unguarded the expression may happen to be, I could not really mean to consider the two opinions separately.

But my criticiser, instead of making any allowance for a casual ungrammatical construction, and of ascertaining my meaning by comparing one expression with another, has absolutely tortured my language, in order to make me contradict myself; and has even employed more than one page out of six only of his own composing, to confute an opinion of which my history itself is a much fuller refutation. This conduct admits of no apology even in a professed answerer of a book, and much less in a *reviewer*, who should exhibit a fair and impartial account of the work before him.

In another passage which this writer has not overlooked, for he has quoted it, though without any particular notice,‡ I have evidently considered *Justin Martyr's* idea of pre-existence as one *species* of a *genus*. It is as follows: "This writer even speaks of his own opinion of the pre-existence of Christ (and he is the first that we certainly know to have maintained it *on the principles on which it was generally received afterwards)* as a doubtful one, and by no means a necessary article of Christian faith."§ Here I evidently refer to his idea of the personification of the *Logos* of the Father, which was *a kind of pre-existence*, quite distinct from that of the *Gnostics*, who preceded him. Let any one prove this opinion of the personification of the *Logos* to have been

* Vol. V. p. 29. † *Ibid.*
‡ *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 518. *(P.)* § Vol. V. p. 22.

held by any person before *Justin Martyr*. If he can, (and I have not expressed myself positively on the subject,) he will still be far from proving that it was the doctrine of the apostles; and whether the innovation took place a little earlier, or a little later, it will make no difference with respect to my principal object.

As this misrepresentation affects one principal part of the great outline of my work, I shall take this opportunity of drawing it more distinctly, for the benefit of my readers in general.

What I have maintained in my late *History of Opinions concerning Christ*, and what I do not find to have been much, if at all, insisted upon before, is, that the exaltation of the person of Jesus Christ began with the *Gnostics*, who maintained the doctrine of the pre-existence of all human souls, as independent, created spirits, capable of animating human bodies. This error began in the time of the apostles, and is known to be referred to by *John*. When this notion was exploded, another, which I cannot trace any higher than *Justin Martyr*, was adopted, and this was the *personification of the Logos* of the Father, which was a thing quite distinct from the doctrine of the *Gnostics*, so that the patrons of each were continually combating one another. The pre-existent spirits, or *Æons*, of the *Gnostics*, were supposed to have existed an indefinite time before the creation of the world; whereas the personification of the *Logos* was represented, by the first advocates of it, as a thing that took place immediately before that event, and with a view to it. The peculiar doctrine of *Arius* was, in my opinion, clearly subsequent to this; and it was after them all, that the personification of the *Logos*, being carried farther back, namely, to all eternity, led to the present doctrine of the *Trinity*, consisting of three persons in the Godhead, perfectly equal with respect to eternity and all divine attributes.

Instead of holding out to the view of the readers this great outline of the first part of my work, on which alone he has descanted, my critic charges me with asserting that the simple pre-existence of Christ was not known before *Justin Martyr;* which shews that he never once formed a right conception of what he undertook to exhibit.

As to the epistles of *Ignatius*, I consider them all, the *less* as well as the *greater*, as being either wholly spurious, or so corrupted as not to be quoted with safety; and I am far from being original or singular in this opinion.

Dr. Lardner, who thinks that the smaller epistles are

in the main genuine, says, " If there be only some few sentiments and expressions which seem inconsistent with the true age of Ignatius, it is more reasonable to suppose them to be additions, than to reject the epistles themselves entirely; especially in this scarcity of copies which we labour under. As the interpolations of the larger epistles are plainly the work of some Arian, so even the smaller epistles may have been tampered with by the Arians, or the orthodox, or both, though I do not affirm that there are in them any considerable corruptions or alterations."*

Salmasius, *Blondel*, and *Daillé*, are decided that all the epistles are spurious; and *Le Sueur*, after giving an account of the whole matter,† says, that the last of them, viz. M. Daillé,‡ has clearly proved that the first, or small collection of *Ignatius's* epistles, was forged about the beginning of the fourth century, or 200 years after the death of *Ignatius*, and that the second, or larger collection, was made at the beginning of the sixth century.§

Is this, then, an authority to be quoted so decisively against me, as to be preceded by, " We will endeavour to answer‖ Dr. Priestley upon grounds less liable to be questioned," (meaning, than that of the hymns used by Christians in early times,) " by the positive testimony of writings which he will hardly assert were penned after those of Justin Martyr."¶ I am not ashamed, however, to assert this after such respectable authorities as I have mentioned above; and I challenge this writer to prove that the passage he has quoted from *Ignatius* was not penned after the time of *Justin Martyr*.

If any passage in these epistles be spurious, I should not hesitate to pronounce *this* to be one. Such language as " fleshly and spiritual, made and not made, God incarnate, real life in death, begotten of Mary and of God, in one respect liable to suffering, and in another incapable of it,"** savours strongly of a much later age than that of *Ignatius*. It is nothing but controversy that teaches such definite and

* *Credibility*, Pt. ii. I. p. 151. *(P.)* *Works*, II. p. 69.

† In his *Histoire de l' Eglise et de l' Empire.*

‡ In his work *De Usu Patrum.* § *Le Sueur*, A. D. 107. *(P.)*

‖ The reader will easily perceive that these animadversions on my work are very improperly called a *review*. They are a professed *answer*, and yet the writer does not so much as mention the arguments on which I lay the greatest stress. Can any thing be more evidently calculated to injure a work, and to mislead the reader with respect to it? It is pluming himself on the victory, before he has even ventured to make the attack; having only, as it were, skirmished at a distance, and even that without gaining any real advantage. *(P.)*

¶ *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 524. *(P.)* ** *Ibid.* p. 525.

guarded language as this. It could not, I think, precede the *Arian* controversy; and this agrees very well with the date assigned to those epistles by M. Daillé, which is after the Council of *Nice*. I should almost as soon think that *Ignatius* composed the *Athanasian Creed*, as this quaint sentence. They are much in the same style. My critic adds, "There are other passages in the writings of this most ancient father, which are equally expressive of the two natures of Christ; but we think this fully sufficient to confute Dr. Priestley's assertion, without troubling the reader with any more quotations."*

Ignatius, not being quoted by *Eusebius*, or his author, among *ancient authorities* for the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, is alone a sufficient proof that no such passage as this was to be found in the epistles of *Ignatius* in his time. If this writer did not know that the genuineness of these epistles of Ignatius was questioned, he ought not to write on these subjects, and if he did know it, it was disingenuous not to mention it.

As to the passage which my critic quotes from *Barnabas*, he himself acknowledges, (but in an ironical manner, unworthy of the seriousness of the argument,) that it may be explained in a sense consistent with the *Socinian* doctrine, as well as some passages of Scripture.† I, however, am a *Socinian*,‡ and I scruple not to say, that, in my opinion, the interpretations of Scripture which he ridicules are the only just and natural ones; but this is not a place for that argument.

It is true that I have quoted the epistle of *Barnabas*§ without saying any thing about its authenticity. In reality, I do not know what to think of it, and my critic must know that the genuineness of it has been much disputed. The passage, however, which he quotes is from that part of it, of which we have only an old Latin version, and this he has not rightly translated. It is *die ante constitutionem seculi*, which is not properly *before the beginning of the world*, but *on the day before the beginning of the world*. Now the notion of the Father speaking to the Son on the very day before the creation, savours, I think, of a later age than that of *Barnabas*. Let any thing like this be produced from the Scriptures. If this be a *plain*, it is, I think, a suspicious *declaration of the pre-existence of Christ*.

* *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 524.

† "We acknowledge it may be *allegorized away* by those who have dexterity enough to use the same method of interpretation with some *plain declarations* of the holy Scriptures." *Ibid.*

‡ "Commonly called." See *supra*, p. 9.

§ Vol. V. p. 26.

SECTION VI.

Of the Doctrine of the Miraculous Conception.

In expressing my opinion concerning the prevalence of the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ, I make a limitation, saying, "This language has all the appearance of an *apology* for an opinion contrary to the general and prevailing one; as that of the humanity of Christ (at least with the belief of the miraculous conception) probably was in his time."* This my criticiser calls "a very great inconsistency." "The Doctor," he says, "has no right to assert his *at least with the belief of a miraculous conception.* The insertion is entirely arbitrary, and those who know less of the author's character than we do, and may not have the same well-grounded assurance of his integrity, may possibly be led to imagine that he introduced those words only to give some colourable pretext to his own principles."†

In all that I have read of controversial writing, I hardly recollect any instance of a more groundless and perverse misrepresentation of a writer's obvious meaning than this, on which so loud an exclamation is founded. For, what can be more evident than that I do not use these words as those of *Justin Martyr*, but only as expressive of an opinion of *my own*, formed from all the circumstances put together? And certainly I have a full right to introduce whatever clause I please into any sentence of *my own*, provided that, as in this case, I make myself only answerable for the propriety of it.

The reason why I was inclined to think that the doctrine of the miraculous conception was pretty generally received by the *Ebionites*, in the time of *Justin*, was, that *Irenæus* passes no censure on any that believed that doctrine. But it may, perhaps, with more probability be inferred, that because neither *Justin Martyr* nor *Irenæus* speaks of any other *Ebionites* than those who maintained that Christ was the proper son of Joseph, the doctrine of the miraculous conception had not gained any ground even among them till a later period. I find no mention of *two kinds* of *Ebionites*, before *Origen*. I repeat it, however, as my real opinion, that the doctrine of the humanity of Christ (at least with the belief of the miraculous conception) was the more general faith of Christians in the time of *Justin Martyr*.

* Vol. V. p. 22.

† *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 522. (*P.*)

Now let the reader judge what occasion there was for the severe strictures on this passage that I have quoted above. In general, I believe it is thought that I express myself so as to be understood; at least I endeavour to do so; but I can never undertake to guard my meaning from such unaccountable constructions as these.

As to the doctrine of the miraculous conception itself, it is not, in fact, of any more consequence to the *Socinian*, than it is to the *Arian* or the *Athanasian* hypothesis; for it is no impediment to the union of the *Arian*, or the *Athanasian Logos*, to the human nature of Christ, that his body was derived from Joseph. For any thing that we can judge, a man produced in the natural way was just as proper for the residence of this heavenly inhabitant, as one made on purpose; and if it was fit that Christ should have a human nature at all, it may be supposed to have been equally fit that he should have a *proper human nature;* differing as little as possible from that of *his brethren*, as we are called. There is, therefore, no more reason why the *Arians* or *Athanasians* should be more attached to the belief of the miraculous conception, than the *Socinians*. The doctrine itself connects equally well, or equally ill, with any particular hypothesis concerning the nature of Christ.

But it is an objection which affects the *Arian* hypothesis only, that, upon their scheme, Christ is properly, and with respect to his person, an *unique* in the creation; there being no *class* or *species* of such beings, at least as far as we are informed of; a being created on purpose to be the maker of all things under God, or the medium of all his communications to mankind. Whereas, upon the *Socinian* hypothesis, Christ, with respect to his person, is no proper *unique*, though produced in a supernatural way; because, when produced, he was precisely of the same *class* and *rank* with other men, who, in themselves considered, were fully equal to him in all respects. Was Adam less properly a *man*, and an *unique*, merely because *the manner of his production* was so? It is, therefore, a very unfair representation that the *Reviewer* gives of this business in his note.* He might as well say that *Enoch* and *Elijah* were *uniques*, because there was something peculiar in their manner of going out of the world, as that Christ was so, because there was something peculiar in his manner of coming into it.

* *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 523. (*P.*)

Should I have any controversy with a *Jew*, I should not feel myself at all embarrassed with this circumstance of the miraculous conception; as I should not hesitate to follow the example of the candid *Justin Martyr* with respect to it; telling him, that he was at full liberty to think as he should see reason to do on that subject; and that he might be as good a Christian as the *Ebionites* were before him, though he should believe no more of the miraculous conception than they had done.

SECTION VII.

Miscellaneous Articles.

I. I DO acknowledge* that I have inadvertently made *Victor* the *successor* of *Zephyrinus*,† but it is certainly of little consequence, and the mistake may be rectified without any injury to my argument. I remember that the passage stood right when it was first printed, but was altered, I cannot recollect how, or why, in the proof sheet. Men of much business, and of a very little candour, will easily excuse a slip of this kind.

II. I also cannot now account for my saying that *Hermas* "is not quoted by *Irenæus*,"‡ when it was a thing that I could not but have observed, or read of. This, however, is of little moment. And, in fact, the mistake is not so great as it seems to be; for *Hermas* is not quoted by name in *Irenæus*, and, when all the circumstances are considered, I even think it may admit of some doubt whether the short passage that *Irenæus* does cite was intended by him for a quotation from *Hermas*. The whole passage is as follows: "The Scripture, therefore, well says, In the first place believe that there is one God, who created and established all things, making them out of nothing;"§ and that passage is found in *the Pastor of Hermas*,‖ but we have only a Latin translation of Hermas, and therefore cannot be quite sure that the *words* were the very same, and the *sense* of them is certainly found in what is properly called *the Scripture;* and I do not know that *Irenæus* ever quotes any other

* See *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 523.

† Vol. V. p. 23; now *predecessor*, according to the *corrections* at the end of this *Reply*.

‡ See *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 525. The passage is amended from the *corrections*, Vol. V. pp. 29, 30.

§ L. iv. C. xxxvii. p. 330. *(P.)*

‖ L. ii. Mand. i. *(P.)* See *Wake*, p. 231.

book by this title except those which we now characterize in that manner. He quotes no other author, I believe, without either his name, or some title, or circumstance, sufficiently descriptive of him. However, I do not insist upon this, and shall correct the passage.

Tertullian says of this work of *Hermas*, "Ab omni concilio ecclesiarum inter apocrypha et falsa judicatur."* It is rejected as spurious by all the councils of the churches.

III. With respect to the *Alogi*, the *Reviewer* says, "Why should it be doubted that there were heretics in his *(Epiphanius's)* day who rejected the gospel of St. John? Were there not heretics in his day, and long before, who rejected other books of the New Testament? Dr. Priestley's conjecture will not be easily admitted. The contrary supposition is natural *à priori*, and it hath the support of history too."†

I ask, of what history before, and in fact, besides that of *Epiphanius?* It is sufficiently evident that there could not have been any who rejected all the writings of *John* before the time of *Eusebius*, who considers very particularly the objections that had been made to the genuineness of the other books; and that the same *Alogi* should reject these books after the time of *Eusebius*, and not before, is highly improbable. *Epiphanius* himself ascribes this rejection to the *Alogi in general*, and not to those of his time only; and he supposes the heresy of the *Alogi* to have been an old one, of which that of *Theodotus* was a branch.

As to the testimony of *Epiphanius*, especially concerning those against whom he writes with so much inveteracy, I own it weighs no more with me than it did with *Le Clerc*, whose opinion of this writer may be seen in his Ecclesiastical History.‡ He is certainly the least to be depended upon of any of the fathers.

The *Reviewer* adds, "Was there not a modern disciple of *Artemon* (Sam. Crellius) who rejected, if not the whole of St. John's gospel, yet the introduction to it, because it was thought to favour the deity of Christ? It is but proceeding a step farther to pronounce the whole to be spurious."§

Though a *Socinian*‖ myself, I do not hold myself obliged to defend what has been advanced by any other Socinian. Like men who think for themselves, we differ as much as

* *De Pudicitia*, C. x. p. 568. *(P.)* † *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 521.
‡ A. D. 103. *(P.)* See *Lardner*, IX. p. 235. § *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 521
‖ See *supra*, p. 29, *Note* ‖.

others who go by the same common name. But certainly this censure is illiberal and unjust. On what grounds *Samuel Crellius** rejected the introduction of *St. John*,† I cannot tell. His grandfather, the famous *John Crellius*,‡ did not. But it has always been deemed a sufficient objection to the genuineness of any writing, that it contains opinions which, from other evidence, appear not to have been those of the age in which it was supposed to have been written. So far am I from rejecting this introduction, that I think it inexplicable, except upon *Socinian* principles. However, between rejecting this *introduction*, and rejecting the *whole gospel*, there are many more steps, or a much larger step, than my *Reviewer* seems to imagine. I hope this writer did not mean to insinuate that *Socinians* in general make so little account of the Gospels, or any part of them, that there is but a small step between them and *Unbelievers;* though by some he may be so understood.

CONCLUSION.

THUS have I presented my readers with a fair and candid state of the charges which have been brought against my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity;* and I think I have made it appear, that all the real oversights are of very little consequence, and may be easily rectified without the least injury to my argument in any one place. I therefore leave it with my readers to determine whether there was any just cause for such vehement exclamation as that with which the critic begins his remarks: "When we review the passages we have now transcribed, we are equally grieved and astonished. *Periculosum est in Limine offendere!* We are grieved to see a writer of Dr. Priestley's eminence, and who hath long stood very high, even in the opinion of his enemies, for integrity of character, laying himself so open to the charge of perversion and misrepresentation. We are astonished at his rashness, though we know that great zeal doth not always listen to the more scrupulous dictates of prudence. But common sense should at least teach it to preserve a decent appearance; and in matters that fall within the circle of history, and where invention can have no play, a writer should be careful not

* See his acquaintance with *Tillotson;* Jortin's *Remarks* in *Birch*, p. 426; *Mon. Repos.* V. pp. 49—55, 169.

† In the *critique* on this *Reply*, Daniel Zwicker is substituted, by the Reviewer, for Samuel Crellius. *Mon. Rev.* LXIX. p. 223.

‡ Who died in 1633, aged 42. See Toulmin's *Socinus*, pp. 408—423.

to give his enemies cause for exultation by positive assertions, which are not only *without* proof, but in *direct opposition* to it. We hope that Dr. Priestley will not think that *we* are become his enemies for speaking the truth. He is the last person that can with any grace complain of a freedom of this sort. He often invites it with an earnestness which shews that he is not afraid of it. We rely on his candour for the freedom we now take with him; and if that should prove to be less in *power* than it is in *form*, (which, however, we do not think will be the case,) we shall rest satisfied with the integrity of our own motives."* Such an attempt to alarm the public, and prejudice the minds of their readers against the work, ought certainly to have had some better foundation.

As to this writer's *integrity*, I do not call it in question; but am very willing to account for his mistakes and misrepresentations on principles similar to those on which, with some degree of candour, he accounts for what he supposed to be mine. Every effect must have an adequate cause, and I cannot account for this writer's very severe and highly unjust treatment of my book without supposing that he looked into it (from what cause I cannot divine) with a very eager desire to find fault with it, and to expose it. A good-natured critic might have pointed out the same oversights, and have shewn how they might be corrected without any real injury to the work.

It is not easy, in a work of such extent, the materials for which were necessarily collected at different times, to put the whole together (when some of the facts, and the evidence of them, must have been in part obliterated from the mind) without making inconsiderable mistakes. No first edition of any large historical work was ever free from them. All these I shall be as solicitous to rectify as any person can be to find them out; and every intimation of this kind I shall willingly receive, whether it comes from a friend or a foe.

I have already drawn out a list of such *corrections* and *additions* as I think of any consequence;† and if there be another edition of the work, I may, perhaps, alter the construction of some other passages which readers of the same turn with this *Reviewer* may misunderstand. But I cannot pretend to write for such readers. It would be giving a

* *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. pp. 519, 520.

† See Vol. V. p. 12. Those *corrections* and *additions* were used in preparing that volume.

great deal of time to very little purpose, and after all might not be effectual; for it is no uncommon thing to labour style into obscurity. I write for the bulk of readers, who have some candour as well as good sense. We do not in this country build our houses so as to have nothing to fear from hurricanes or earthquakes. It is enough to guard them against more common accidents.

This *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* is a work that I have long had in view.* I consider it as the most *useful*, and therefore I wish to make it the most *correct* of all my publications. Nothing shall be wanting on my part to make it so, and I hope my enemies will not be wanting on theirs. My object, I trust, is *truth*. I shall pursue it with fairness, and without fear of consequences, and I shall consider every man as acting with me who shall aid me in the pursuit. Opposition is what I always expected, and in reality do not dislike. Indeed, no person ought to step into the great amphitheatre of the public, who is not willing to take his chance for all accidents, (for treatment fair and unfair,) and who is not prepared to meet them. Few persons have been more disciplined in this way than myself, and therefore I must be made of bad materials indeed, if I be not better prepared than most others for all these events. It will be happy if the discipline of this life in general prepare me as well for the exercises of another.

It may amuse some of my readers to be informed that, excepting a copy of verses prefixed to *Peter Annet's* short hand,† and written when I was a school-boy, my first essay for the press was an article in the *Monthly Review;* so that when I was *twenty* I was placed upon the *bench*, and now at *fifty* I stand at the *bar*, and sometimes perhaps before such judges as I myself then was. From this awful tribunal, though my real merit has been nearly the same, I have sometimes received the most virulent censure, and at others the greatest applause, when I have been conscious to myself that I have not been entitled to either. But undue praise may serve to counterbalance undue censure.

As to my *literary reputation*, I can truly say that, little as it may be, it is quite sufficient to content me, and it ought to be so, for it is something more than I deserve. I can pretend to no such "superior qualifications" as my

* See Vol. V. pp. 8, 10.

† Sixteen lines signed *J. Priestley*, one of four copies of commendatory verses, addressed "To Mr. Annet on his New Short Hand." See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 24, 78. *Peter Annet* died in 1769, aged 77. See *Gent. Mag.* XXXIX. p. 55.

present critic, whether in earnest or not, has thought proper to ascribe to me.* Success in such pursuits as I have been engaged in, I well know, requires no great extent of mental power, but God has been pleased to give me an active, and I hope an honest mind; and when a man is always busily seeking, with his eyes fairly open, and especially in places where others are afraid to go, he will sometimes find things worth looking for, and that had escaped more timid researchers.

It has pleased God, in the course of his providence, to open my own eyes, after having been educated in all the gloom and darkness of *Calvinism*,† and I am determined (in conjunction with my philosophical researches) to do all that I can to open the eyes of others. With this object in view, I am ready, with the apostle, to go through *evil report as well as good report;* and whatever of active life may remain to me, I am resolved to make the most of it; there being, as the saying is, *rest enough in the grave.* I have no higher wish with respect to this life, than to live and die in the various pursuits in which I am now engaged; and I hope to rise to a scene of equal activity, and of equally pleasurable and useful pursuits, in a future life.‡

* *Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 521. (*P.*)

† See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 12—15, 18.

‡ The criticism on this *Reply*, in the Monthly Review, (LXIX. p. 215,) occasioned the following letter, which appeared in the Correspondence (p. 359):

"*To the Editor of the Monthly Review.*

"Sir, *Birmingham*, 16th *Oct.* 1783.

"I have read with care the answer to my Reply in your last Review, and though I think I am ready to correct any mistakes that I have fallen into, I see no reason to wish that I had written any thing otherwise than I have done, except that, in the fifth Section of my Reply, I understood the Reviewer too literally.

"With respect to the *Answer*, I wish only to observe that *Suicer* draws the same inference that I have done from the passage in Jerome, that both *Beausobre*, and the Catholic translator of Athanasius, understood him to speak of the believing Jews, in the passage that I quoted from him; and that, in a series of *Letters to Dr. Horsley*, now in the press, and which will contain additional evidence of the primitive Christian Church having been Unitarian, I shall shew that it will not admit of any other construction.

"I am, Sir, yours, &c.

"J. PRIESTLEY."

LETTERS TO Dr. HORSLEY,

IN ANSWER TO HIS

Animadversions

ON

THE HISTORY OF THE CORRUPTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY;

WITH ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE

THAT THE

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN CHURCH WAS UNITARIAN.

Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.

1 Kings xx. 11.

[*Birmingham*, 1783.]

PREFACE.

My design in writing the *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, it will easily be perceived, was to compose a work proper for the use of all Christians, learned and unlearned, and indeed chiefly the latter. Also, having an extensive object before me, I did not give much more attention to one part of the scheme than to another. On these accounts I avoided all unnecessary quotations from original writers in the languages in which they wrote, especially in *Greek*, which I had great difficulty in getting printed; but I gave some passages that were of particular value, and in *Latin*, and distinctly referred to as many others as I had actually made use of myself; making a point of referring to none, at first or second hand, of which I saw any reason to doubt.

It has happened that hitherto the first article in my work, viz. *The History of Opinions concerning Christ*,* has attracted the more particular notice of critics, which has led me to study this subject more than I should otherwise have done; and I think it will probably engage my attention some time longer. Indeed, as the question is of particular importance, I think it right to take every method in my

* Vol. V. pp. 13—90.

power to invite and promote the fullest discussion of it. With this view, I replied to some remarks of a writer in the *Monthly Review*,* which, though not in the least affecting my principal argument, gave me an opportunity to add some new illustrations.

Dr. Horsley's *Charge to his Clergy*† has afforded me another opportunity of re-examining the subject; and the result, which is now before the reader, has been, as I think, a further illustration and a stronger confirmation of my original position, viz. that the belief that Christ was a mere man, naturally possessed of no other powers than other men have, but a distinguished messenger of God, and the chief instrument in his hands for the good of men, was the original faith of the Christian Church, consisting both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*.

This controversy, I hope, will continue, either with Dr. Horsley or some other person. Nothing, however, shall be wanting on my part to keep it up, so long as any new light shall appear to be thrown upon the question in debate; and after this I intend to compose an entire work on this subject only; stating, in as clear a light as I shall be able, the evidence of the above important truth, (for such I cannot help considering it,) as it shall then appear to me, with all the proper authorities in the original languages, and leave it to make whatever impression it may on the minds of others, having then done my duty with respect to it.

In the mean time, I am by no means sanguine in my expectations from the effect of the most forcible arguments, on the minds of those who are at present indisposed to receive the opinion that I contend for, in consequence of strong early prejudices in favour of a different one; prejudices which have been confirmed by much reading, thinking, and conversation, especially if those who are influenced by them be advanced in life. It is happy for the cause of truth, as well as other valuable purposes, that man is mortal; and that while the species continues, the individuals go off the stage. For otherwise the whole species would soon arrive at its *maximum* in all improvements, as individuals now do.

If any person ought to have candour for others in this respect, I ought; having had abundant experience of the

* For June, 1783. See *supra*, pp. 3—37.

† "A Charge to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of St. Albans," 1783. Republished by Bishop Horsley, in his "Tracts in Controversy with Dr. Priestley," 1789, pp. 1—80.

difficulty with which deep-rooted prejudices give way to the strongest evidence, even when the mind is naturally active, and the attention is constantly kept in a state of inquiry. On this account, a short history of the progress of my own thoughts with respect to this subject may be useful. To myself the reflection upon it is highly so, at the same time that it is not a little humbling.

Having been educated in the strictest principles of *Calvinism*,* and having from my early years had a serious turn of mind, promoted no doubt by a weak and sickly constitution, I was very sincere and zealous in my belief of the doctrine of the Trinity; and this continued till I was about nineteen; and then I was as much shocked on hearing of any who denied the divinity of Christ (thinking it to be nothing less than impiety and blasphemy) as any of my opponents can be now. I therefore truly feel for them, and most sincerely excuse them.

About the age of twenty, being then in a regular course of theological studies, I saw reason to change my opinion, and became an *Arian;* and notwithstanding what appeared to me a fair and impartial study of the Scriptures, and though I had no bias on my mind arising from subscribed creeds and confessions of faith, &c., I continued in that persuasion fifteen or sixteen years;† and yet in that time I was well acquainted with Dr. Lardner, Dr. Fleming, and several other zealous *Socinians*, especially my friend Mr. Graham.‡ The first theological tract of mine (which was on the Doctrine of Atonement) was published at the particular request and under the direction of Dr. Lardner;§ and he approving of the scheme which I had then formed, of giving a short view (which was all that I had then thought of) of the progress of the corruptions of Christianity, gave me a few hints with respect to it. But still I continued till after his death indisposed to the Socinian *hypothesis*. After this, continuing my study of the Scriptures, with the help of his *Letters on the Logos*, I at length changed my opinion, and became what is called a *Socinian;* and in this I see continually more reason to acquiesce, though it was a long time before the arguments in favour of it did more than barely preponderate in my mind.‖

* See *supra*, p. 37. † See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 31, 48.
‡ See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 11; Vol. III. p. 199. § In 1761.
‖ For the arguments which had the principal weight with me at that time, and particularly those texts of scripture which so long retarded my change of opinion, I refer my readers to the *Theological Repository*, III. pp. 345—363. (*P.*)

I was greatly confirmed in this doctrine after I was fully satisfied that man is of an uniform composition, and wholly mortal; and that the doctrine of a separate immaterial soul, capable of sensation and action when the body is in the grave, is a notion borrowed from Heathen philosophy, and unknown to the Scriptures. Of this I had for a long time a mere *suspicion;* but having casually mentioned it as such, and a violent outcry being raised against me on that account,* I was induced to give the greatest attention to the question, to examine it in every light, and to invite the fullest discussion of it. This terminated in as full a conviction with respect to this subject as I have with respect to any other whatever. The reasons on which that conviction is founded may be seen in my *Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit,*† of which I have lately published a new and improved edition.

Being now fully persuaded that Christ was a man like ourselves, and consequently that his pre-existence, as well as that of other men, was a notion that had no foundation in reason or in the Scriptures; and having been gradually led (in consequence of wishing to trace the principal corruptions of Christianity) to give particular attention to ecclesiastical history, I could not help thinking but that (since the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ was not the doctrine of the Scriptures, and therefore could not have been taught by the apostles) there must be some traces of the rise and progress of the doctrine of the Trinity, and some historical evidence that *Unitarianism* was the general faith of Christians in the apostolical age, independent of the evidence which arose from its being the doctrine of the Scriptures.

In this state of mind, the reader will easily perceive that I naturally expected to find, what I was previously well persuaded *was to be found;* and in time I collected much more evidence than I at first expected, considering the early rise, and the long and universal spread, of what I deem to be a radical corruption of the genuine Christian doctrine. This evidence I have fairly laid before the reader. He must judge of the weight of it, and also make whatever allowance he may think necessary for my particular situation and prejudices.

I am well aware that it is naturally impossible that the evidence I have produced should impress the minds of those who are *Arians* or *Athanasians*, as it will those of *Socinians;*

* See Vol. III. pp. 181, 182, 202. † Vol. III. pp. 242—258.

nor are men to be convinced of the proper humanity of Christ, by arguments of this kind. They must begin, as I did, with the study of the Scriptures; and whatever be the result of that study, it will be impossible for them, let them discipline their minds as they will, not to be influenced in the historical inquiry, as I was, by their previous persuasion concerning the subject of it. If, however, they should be so far impressed with the historical arguments, as to think it probable that the Christian church was in a very early period Unitarian; it will, no doubt, lead them to expect that they shall find the doctrine of the Scriptures, truly interpreted, to be so too.

With respect to myself, I do not know that I can do any thing more. Being persuaded, as I am, from the study of the Scriptures, that Christ is properly a man, I cannot cease to think so; nor can I possibly help the influence of that persuasion in my historical researches. Let other persons write as freely on their respective *hypotheses* as I have done on mine; and then indifferent persons, and especially younger persons, whose minds have not acquired the stiffness of ours, who are turned fifty, may derive benefit from it.

Firm as my persuasion now is concerning the proper humanity of Christ, (a persuasion that has been the slow growth of years, and the result of much anxious and patient thinking,) I do not know that, in the course of my inquiry, I have been under the influence of *prejudice* more than all other men naturally are. As to *reputation*, a man may distinguish himself just as much by the defence of old systems as by the erection of new ones; but I have neither formed any new systems, nor have I particularly distinguished myself in the defence of old ones. When I first became an *Arian*, and afterwards a *Socinian*, I was only a convert, in company with many others; and was far from having any thoughts of troubling the world with publications on the subject. This I have been led to do by a series of events, of which I had no foresight, and of which I do not see the issue.

The conclusion that I have formed, with respect to the subject of this work, and my exertions in support of it, are, however, constantly ascribed by my opponents to a force of prejudice and prepossession, so strong as to pervert my judgment in the plainest of all cases. Of this I may not be a proper judge; but analogy may be some guide to myself as well as to others in this case.

Now, what appears to have been my disposition in other

similar cases? Have I been particularly attached to *hypotheses* in philosophy, even to my own, which always create a stronger attachment than those of other persons? On the contrary, I will venture to say that no person is generally thought to be less so; nor has it been imagined that my pursuits have been at all defeated or injured by any prepossession in favour of particular theories; and yet theories are as apt to mislead in philosophical as in any other subjects. I have always shewn the greatest readiness to abandon any hypothesis that I have advanced, and even defended while I thought it defensible, the moment I have suspected it to be ill founded, whether the new facts that have refuted it were discovered by myself or others. My friends in general have blamed me for my extreme facility in this respect; and if I may judge of myself by my own feelings, after the closest examination that I can give myself, I am just the same with respect to theology.

In the course of my life I have held and defended opinions very different from those which I hold at present. Now, if my obstinacy in retaining and defending opinions had been so great as my opponents represent it, why did it not long ago put a stop to all my changes, and fix me a *Trinitarian* or an *Arian?* Let those who have given stronger proofs of their minds being open to conviction than mine has been, throw the first stone at me.

I am well aware of the nature and force of that opposition and obloquy to which I am exposing myself in consequence of writing my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, the most valuable, I trust, of all my publications; and especially in consequence of the pains that have been taken to magnify and expose a few inaccuracies, to which all works of a similar nature have been and ever must be subject. But I have the fullest persuasion that the real oversights in it are of the smallest magnitude, and do not at all affect any one position or argument in my work, as I hope to satisfy all candid judges; and as to mere cavil and reproach, I thank God, I am well able to bear it.

The odium I brought upon myself by maintaining the doctrines of *Materialism* and *Necessity*, without attempting to cover or soften terms of so frightful a sound, and without palliating any of their consequences, was unspeakably greater than what this business can bring upon me. At the beginning of that controversy I had few, very few indeed, of my nearest friends, who were with me in the

argument. They, however, who knew me, knew my motives, and excused me; but the Christian world in general regarded me with the greatest abhorrence. I was considered as an unprincipled infidel, either an Atheist or in league with Atheists.* In this light I was repeatedly exhibited in all the public papers; and the *Monthly Review*, and other *Reviews*, with all the similar publications of the day, joined in the popular cry. But a few years have seen the end of it. At least all that is left would not disturb the merest novice in these things. The consequence (which I now enjoy) is a great increase of *Materialists;* not of *atheistical* ones, as some will still represent it, but of the most serious, the most rational and consistent Christians.

A similar issue I firmly expect from the present controversy, unpromising as it may appear in the eyes of some, who are struck with what is speciously and confidently urged. For my own part, I truly rejoice in the present appearance of things; as I foresee that much good will arise from the attention that will by this means be drawn upon the subject; and as I hope I respect the hand of God in every thing, I thank him for leading me into this business; as I hope to have occasion to thank him, some years hence, for leading me through it, and with as much advantage as I have been led through the other.

It is, indeed, my firm, and it is my joyful persuasion, that there is a wise Providence overruling all inquiries, as well as other events. The wisdom of God has appeared, as I have endeavoured to point out, even in the corruptions of Christianity and the spread of error; and it is equally conspicuous in the discovery and propagation of truth.

I am far from thinking that the great Being who superintends all things, guides my pen any more than he does that of my fiercest opponent; but I believe that by means of our joint labours, and those of all who engage in theological controversy, (which is eminently useful in rousing men to the utmost exertion of their faculties,) he is promoting his own excellent purposes, and providing for the prevalence of truth, *in his own due time;* and in this general prospect we ought all equally to rejoice.

It becomes us, however, to consider, that they only will be entitled to praise, who join in carrying on the designs of Providence with *right views of their own;* who are actuated by a real love of truth, and also by that candour and bene-

* See Vol. III. p. 203. In 1779, was published "The Sadducee: a poem, occasioned by Dr. Priestley's Essay on Matter." See *Mon. Rev.* LX. p. 335.

volence, which a sense of our common difficulties in the investigation of truth most effectually inspires. A man who has never changed an opinion cannot have much feeling of this difficulty, and therefore cannot be expected to have much candour, unless his disposition be uncommonly excellent. I ought to have more candour than many others, because I have felt more than many can pretend to have done, the force of those obstacles which retard our progress in the search of truth.

With much tranquillity, a tranquillity acquired by habit, but more approaching to a pleasing alacrity, than to any uneasy apprehension, I shall wait the issue of the present controversy; freely retracting whatever I shall be found to have advanced with too little consideration; moderating any thing on which I shall appear to have laid too much stress, and urging with the greatest freedom every new argument or illustration that may occur to me, till I shall have nothing of consequence to allege. After this I shall no longer reply to particular opponents, but content myself with making such *corrections* and *improvements* either in my *History*, or my intended *View of the Doctrine of the first Ages of the Christian Church, concerning the Person of Christ*, as I may see necessary; submitting every thing to the judgment of those who may think proper to give any attention to the subject.

I cannot conclude this Preface without cautioning our readers not to imagine that this is a mere trial of skill between me and my opponents. It is the opening of a serious and important controversy, tending to decide whether the Christian Church in the age of the apostles was *Unitarian* or *Trinitarian;* which, independently of any arguments from particular texts of scripture, will assist us to determine whether the doctrine of the Trinity, which has had so long possession of the minds of the Christian world, be a real doctrine of Christianity, or one of its oldest and worst corruptions.

I wish to draw out the ablest men, both on the Trinitarian and the Arian side of the question; and I hope that I shall not long be the *principal* on the proper Unitarian side. My *Vindicator** is much better qualified to take this place, and leave me that of *auxiliary*.

I would further observe, that in a controversy so various and extensive as this will probably be, it should not be

* The author of "Remarks in Vindication of Dr. Priestley." See *supra*, p. 17, *Note* *.

imagined that the question is absolutely decided when any particular advantage is gained on either side. All men are liable to oversights; but a judicious reader will consider the extent and consequences of an oversight, and particularly whether it affects the question itself, or the writer only.

Especially, let not persons who are not themselves much conversant in ecclesiastical history, conclude that when any writer has gained a *seeming* advantage, it is therefore a *real* and *final* one; but let them wait till his opponent has been heard. On the first appearance of Dr. Horsley's *Charge*, many persons considered it as decisive against me. Others may now think as favourably of my side of the argument. But let all persons suspend their judgment till they see that we have nothing of consequence to allege further, and let a reasonable time be given to each of us.

To the *Letters to Dr. Horsley* I have subjoined a *Postscript* of supplemental and miscellaneous matters; and especially a *Summary View** of all the evidence that I have hitherto been able to collect, and *Maxims of Historical Criticism*† with which the several articles may be compared. I wish that my opponents would take the same or any similar method, in order to bring the controversy to a more easy, speedy, and satisfactory termination.

I have likewise added some notice of the writer in the *Monthly Review* for September last, which contains a large answer to my reply to his former animadversions.‡ It was certainly improper for a person who assumes the character of a *judge* to become a *party* in the dispute.§ With the intentions that he avows, of drawing me into a controversy, he ought to have left his former province of *reviewer* to another; and not to have availed himself of the prodigious advantage of the cheap and immense circulation which the Review gave him. As Dr. Horsley considers this writer as "learned in ecclesiastical history,"‖ and may wish to have him for an ally, let him not, like *Commodus*, throw his darts from a *stage;* but, if he have any confidence in his own prowess, (of which he seems to have no distrust,) let him, masked or unmasked, descend into the *arena* along with us.

* *Appendix*, No. I. † *Ibid.* No. II.

‡ See *infra* at the close of these Letters.

§ Dr. Priestley had experienced similar treatment, in 1777, from Dr. Kenrick, Editor of the *London Review*. See Vol. IV. p. 138, *Note*. Mr. Badcock was then Dr. Priestley's *Vindicator*. See *ibid.* p. iv.

‖ *Charge*, p. 77. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 76.

AN INTRODUCTORY LETTER.

DEAR SIR,

As it is my earnest wish that every subject of importance may be fully investigated, I am happy to find that you have done me the honour to animadvert on my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, in your late *Charge to the Clergy* at *St. Albans*, as you formerly did on my *Treatise on Philosophical Necessity*, in a *Sermon*.* I was in hopes that my reply to the latter would have led you to pursue the argument with me to its proper termination. But though I failed in my attempts to engage your assistance in that inquiry, I flatter myself that I shall be more successful in this; especially as, by the temper and style of your performance, you seem to interest yourself more deeply in this subject, imagining, no doubt, and very justly, that much more depends upon it.

You have given, however, a degree of importance to my work which, I own, I had not thought of myself, when you say to your reverend brethren, "You will easily conjecture that what has led me into these reflections, is the extraordinary attempt which hath lately been made to unsettle the faith, and to break up the constitution, of every ecclesiastical establishment in Christendom. Such is the avowed object of a recent publication, which bears the title of *A History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, among which the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity, in the author's opinion, holds a principal place."†

Now I see nothing so very extraordinary in my attempt. I have only done what has been done by every other person who has endeavoured to refute the doctrine of the Trinity, or any other essential article of established churches. However, as you seem to have taken so particular an alarm in this case, I am willing to hope you will exert yourself with proportionable vigour; when, in your apprehension, it is no less than *to save a falling state*. Before I enter upon the subject itself, I must endeavour to set you right with respect to two preliminary circumstances.

Whether it be to my credit or not, I must observe that you make my reading to be more extensive than it is, when

* See Vol. IV. p. 150, *Note*.
† *Charge*, p. 5. (*P. Tracts*, p. 5.

you suppose me to have borrowed my principal arguments from *Daniel Zwicker* or *Episcopius** I do assure you, Sir, I do not recollect that I ever met with the name of *Zwicker* before I saw it in this publication of yours; for *Episcopius* I have the highest reverence; and I thank you for informing me that, though an *Arian* himself, he was convinced that the Christian church was originally what is now called *Socinian*.†

On the other hand, by your recommending Bishop Bull's *Defence of the Nicene Faith*‡ so very strongly, and not mentioning any other modern writers,§ you seem to have overlooked, or to have undervalued, several works which may certainly be very useful to those who wish to form an impartial judgment on the subject of this controversy; especially Whitby's *Disquisitiones Modestæ*, in answer to Bishop Bull, and his *Replies to Waterland*,‖ with several pieces in the *Socinian Tracts*, in three small volumes 4to. But I am more particularly surprised that you should not have mentioned Dr. Clarke's celebrated *Treatise on the Trinity*,¶ which is calculated to be of the greatest use to those who would study this subject; containing all the texts that relate to it, most advantageously arranged for the purpose, together with some very useful references to the Christian fathers. There are several parts of that work which I would take the liberty to recommend to your own particular attention.

You charge me with *arguing in a circle;* saying, "It is the professed object of his undertaking to exhibit a view of the gradual changes of opinions, in order to ascertain the faith of the first ages: and he would ascertain the faith of the first ages in order to settle the sense of the Scriptures in disputed points. He is, therefore, not at liberty to assume

* *Tracts*, pp. 6, 7. On *Zwicker*, see Vol. VI. p. 10.

† This is not quite correct. Dr. Horsley says, "Episcopius, though himself no Socinian, very indiscreetly concurred with the Socinians of his time, in maintaining, that the opinion of the mere humanity of Christ had prevailed very generally in the first ages; and was never deemed heretical by the Fathers of the Orthodox persuasion; at least not in such degree as to exclude from the communion of the Church." *Tracts*, p. 7.

Episcopius, had he been an *Arian*, could scarcely have become a party to the *Confession* of the *Remonstrants*, 1621; in which his name appears, first, among the signatures. He is also said to have written in Latin the large Preface in defence of Confessions. See Chap. iii. "Of the Holy and Sacred Trinity" in "The Confession —translated into English," pp. 93—96; Brandt's *Hist. Reform.* IV. pp. 217, 218, 324, 325; De La Roche's *Abridgment*, 1725, pp. 684—688.

‡ See *Biog. Brit.* II. pp. 702, 703, *Notes.*

§ See *Tracts*, pp. 65, 66. ‖ Published 1718 and 1720.

¶ "Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity," Ed. 3, 1732.

any sense of the Scriptures, which, because it is his own, he may be pleased to call the clear sense, for a proof that the original faith was such as would confirm the sense he wishes to establish."*

"So long," you say, "as the sixth page of the first volume of Dr. Priestley's History shall be extant, the masters of the dialectic art will be at no loss for an example of the circulating syllogism."† But unless they be provided with one already, you must look out for them elsewhere, as this you have now pitched upon will not answer their purpose, if they be really masters of the dialectic art.

Had I produced no other proof of the Unitarianism of the *Scriptures* besides that of the *primitive church*, and also no other proof of the Unitarianism of the primitive church besides that of the Scriptures, I should have argued in a circle. But you will find that I have been far from doing this.

Is it not usual with all writers who wish to prove *two things*, which mutually prove each other, to observe that they *do* prove each other; and, therefore, that whatever evidence can be alleged for either of them is fully in point with respect to the other? Now this is all that I have done with respect to the Unitarianism of the Scriptures, and of the primitive church, which prove each other; only that, in my *History*, I do not profess to enter into the separate proof of the Unitarian doctrine, from the Scriptures.

This I there take for granted had been sufficiently done already by myself and others; and I therefore proceed to prove the Unitarianism of the primitive church from *independent evidence;* only observing that the Unitarian doctrine having been taught by the apostles is likewise a proof of the same thing. But this I could not suppose would have any weight with those who are Trinitarians, though it was not improper to mention it with respect to others with whom it would have weight.

I might have urged another kind of argument against both the divinity and the pre-existence of Christ, viz. from the doctrine of the *materiality* of man, which I presume has been sufficiently proved in my *Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit*. I maintain that there is no more reason why a *man* should be supposed to have an immaterial principle within him, than that a *dog*, a *plant*, or a *magnet*, should have one; because, in all these cases, there is just the same difficulty

* *Charge*, p. 12. *(P.) Tracts*, pp. 11, 12. † *Ibid.* p. 12.

in imagining any connexion between the visible matter of which they consist, and the invisible powers of which they are possessed. If *universal concomitance* be the foundation of all our reasoning concerning causes and effects, the organized brain of a man must be deemed to be the proper seat and immediate cause of his sensation and thinking,* as much as the inward structure of a magnet, whatever that be, is the cause of its power of attracting iron.

This is a very short and plain argument, perfectly consonant to all our reasoning in philosophy: and it is conclusive against the doctrine of a soul, and consequently against the whole system of pre-existence. If then *Peter*, *James* and *John* had no pre-existent state, it must be contrary to all analogy to suppose *Jesus* to have pre-existed. His being a prophet, and having a power of working miracles, can make no just exception in his favour; for then every preceding prophet must have pre-existed.

I think I have also proved in my *Disquisitions* that the doctrine of a *soul*, as a substance distinct from the body, and capable of being happy or miserable when the body is in the grave, was borrowed from Pagan philosophy, is totally repugnant to the system of revelation, and unknown in the Scriptures,† which speak of no reward for the righteous, or punishment for the wicked, before the general resurrection, and the coming of Christ to judge the world.

I might therefore have urged that, since the doctrine of Christ's *pre-existence* is contrary to reason, and was never taught by Christ or his apostles, it could not have been the faith of their immediate disciples in the first ages of Christianity. This argument will have its weight with those who reject the doctrine of a soul, and make them look with suspicion upon any pretended proof of the doctrine of Christ's pre-existence, and of its having been the faith of the apostolical age, as well as their previous persuasion that such is not the doctrine of the Scriptures. And since all the three positions are capable of independent proof, the urging of them would not have been *arguing in a circle*, but the adducing a proper *collateral evidence*.

I am, &c.

* "Those noble pair of physicians, *Hippocrates* and *Galen*," says *Hakewill*, "have made it evident, by experimental proofs, that those divine powers of reasoning and discourse are seated in the brain." *Apologie*, 1630, p. 5. "The evidences that cogitation and all other rational acts in men, depend upon the brain, and are performed in it and by it, seem to me," says *Layton*, "so clear and undeniable, as that it may pass for a strong proof that the brain of man is cogitative matter, or very like it." *Observations on Bentley*, 1693, p. 16.

† See Vol. III. pp. 404—416.

LETTER I.

Of the Argument from the Writings of the Apostles and the Apostolical Fathers.

DEAR SIR,

BEFORE I consider what you have said with respect to the apostolical fathers, I must take some notice of what you have advanced with respect to the argument from *scripture;* though, in this *Charge*, you do not professedly go upon that ground.

You take it for granted that the *logos*, mentioned in the introduction to the gospel of John, must be a *person*, and not a mere *attribute*, because it is referred to by the pronoun οὗτος. "This person," you say, "(for this is the natural force of the Greek pronoun οὗτος) this person was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him," &c.* Whereas, this pronoun may refer to any thing that is of the same gender in the Greek language, whether it be a person or not; and it requires but a moderate acquaintance with the New Testament to observe instances of it even there; as in *Matt.* vii. 12, οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ νομος, "This is the law," and *Rev.* xx. 14, οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ δευτερος θανατος, "This is the second death."

The same pronoun refers to the *temple*, ναος, *John* ii. 20; to *bread*, αρτος, *John* vi. 50; to *stones*, λιθοι, *Matt.* iv. 3; *Acts* iv. 11; a *salutation*, ασπασμος, *Luke* i. 29, and not less than eight times to λογος, where it certainly means nothing more than *speech*, as *Matt.* xxviii. 15, &c. To satisfy yourself, only look into any Concordance of the *Greek Testament.*

The *logos* of *John*, therefore, may be a mere attribute of the Father, though it be the antecedent to the pronoun οὗτος; for you will hardly say that the *law*, or *death*, or the *temple*, &c. &c. is a real person capable of intention and action. Besides, I do suppose that *John* uses a *figurative personification*, which would require the same forms of speech as if he had intended to speak of a real person.

You also find a reference to the pre-existent state of our Saviour in 1 *John* iv. 2, where it is said "every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God;" by which you say, the opinion that Christ "was

* *Tracts*, p. 12. See *Appendix*, No. III.

truly a man, if he was nothing more than man, is very awkwardly and unnaturally expressed. The turn of the expression," you add, "seems to lead to the notion of a being who had his choice of different ways of coming."*

On the other hand, I think the phrase sufficiently similar to other Jewish phrases, of which we find various examples in the Scriptures, and that it may be explained by the phrase "partakers of flesh and blood," *Heb.* ii. 14. If the word *coming* must necessarily mean *coming from heaven*, and imply a pre-existent state, *John the Baptist* must have pre-existed: for our Saviour uses that expression concerning him, as well as concerning himself, *Matt.* xi. 18, 19: "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say he hath a *dæmon*. The Son of Man came eating and drinking," &c. It may also be asserted with more certainty still concerning all the apostles that they pre-existed; for our Saviour, in his prayer for them, respecting their mission, makes use of the term *world*, which is not found in 1 *John* iv. 2, where he says, *John* xvii. 18, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."

The phrase *coming in the flesh*, in my opinion, refers very naturally to the doctrine of the *Gnostics*, who supposed Christ to be a super-angelic spirit, which descended from heaven, and entered into the body of Jesus. The phrase *he that should come*, or *who was to come*, (his coming having been foretold by the prophets,) appears to have been familiar to the Jews, to denote the *Messiah:* but with them it certainly did not imply any coming down from heaven, because they had no such idea concerning their Messiah.

I see no trace, therefore, in the epistle of *John*, of any more than *one heresy*. He neither expressly says nor hints that there were *two;* and part of his description of this one heresy evidently points to that of the *Gnostics*, as is acknowledged by yourself; and this heresy was as different as possible from that of the *Ebionites*. The early writers who speak of them, mention them as *two opposite heresies*, existing in the same early period; so that it is very improbable *à priori*, that the same expression, as you say, should be equally levelled at them both.† *Gnosticism* being certainly condemned therefore by the apostle, and not the doctrine of the *Ebionites*, I conclude that in the latter, which is allowed to have existed in his time, he saw nothing worthy

* *Charge*, p. 15. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 15.
† *Charge*, p. 16. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 16.

of censure; but that it was the doctrine which he himself had taught. If this apostle had thought as you do with respect to it, why did he not censure it unequivocally, as you do, and with as much severity?

Tertullian, indeed, maintained that, by those who denied that *Christ was come in the flesh*, John meant the *Gnostics*, and that by those who denied that *Jesus was the son of God*, he meant the *Ebionites*.* He had no idea that the former expression only could include both. But as the Gnostics maintained that *Jesus* and *the Christ* were different persons, the latter having come from heaven, and being the son of God, whereas Jesus was the son of man only, the expression of *Jesus being the son of God* is as directly opposed to the doctrine of the Gnostics as that of *Christ coming in the flesh*.

You say, "It appears, therefore, that to confess that 'Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,' and to affirm that Jesus Christ is truly a man, are propositions not perfectly equivalent. Dr. Priestley indeed has shewn himself very sensible of the difference. He would not have otherwise found it necessary, for the improvement of his argument, in reciting the third verse of the 4th chapter of St. John's first epistle,† to change the expressions which he found in the public translation, for others which correspond far less exactly with the Greek text. For the words 'Jesus Christ is come *in* the flesh,' Dr. Priestley substitutes these: 'Jesus Christ is come *of* the flesh.'" You add afterwards, "He might think it no unwarrantable liberty to correct an expression which, as not perfectly corresponding with his own system, he could not entirely approve. It would have been but fair to advertise his readers of so capital an emendation; an emendation for which no support is to be found in the Greek text, nor even in the varieties of any MSS."‡

I am sorry, Sir, that my printer, or my own mistake, should have given you all this trouble in consulting MSS. &c. I do assure you I had no knowledge of having made a change in a single word in copying that text, nor should I have wished to have made any change at all in it; thinking that, as it now stands, it is quite as much for my purpose as that which you suppose I have purposely substituted in its place. Had you thought me capable of an attempt of this kind, you should not have ascribed to me, as you have

* *De Præscriptione Hæreticorum*, Sect. xxxiii. p. 214. *(P.)* See Vol. XVII. p. 36, *Note* †; *Lardner*, IX. p. 234, *Note* m.

† Corrected, Vol. V. p. 18.

‡ *Charge*, p. 17. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 17.

done, the greatest *purity of intention* in all that I have written on this subject.

I now proceed to remark on what you have observed from *Clemens Romanus*, concerning the pre-existence of Christ.

You think that, through my excessive zeal for an *hypothesis*, I make every thing to favour it; but I hardly think that you can find any thing in my attempt to support the *Socinian* doctrine, that discovers more zeal than you manifest in support of the *Athanasian* one; and I think that excessive zeal has misled you in as remarkable a manner as you suppose mine to have misled me. I can no otherwise account for your asserting, that the notion of Christ having "had his choice of different ways of coming into the world —is explicitly expressed in a book little inferior in authority to the canonical writings, in the first epistle of Clemens Romanus, in a passage of that epistle which Dr. Priestley, somewhat unfortunately for his cause, has chosen for the basis of an argument of that holy father's heterodoxy. 'The sceptre of the majesty of God,' says Clemens, 'our Lord Jesus Christ, came not in the pomp of pride and arrogance, *although he had it in his power.*' Clemens, it seems, conceived that the manner of coming was in the power and choice of the person who was to come."*

Of this I have no doubt; but the question is, from *whence* he was then to come. *Clemens* does not say that it was *from heaven to earth.* That is entirely your own interpretation, for which I see no ground at all; since the phrase is so easily explained by his entering upon his commission, as a public teacher; when, being invested with the power of working miracles, he never made any ostentatious display of it, or indeed exerted it for his own benefit in any respect.

Besides *Clemens Romanus*, you refer to the epistles of *Ignatius*, for a proof of the early knowledge of the doctrine of Christ's divinity. "The holy father," you say, "hardly ever mentions Christ without introducing some explicit assertion of his divinity, or without joining with the name of Christ some epithet in which it is implied."† All this is very true, according to our present copies of *Ignatius's* epistles. But you must know that the genuineness of them is not only very much doubted, but generally given up by the learned; and it was not perfectly ingenuous in you to

* *Charge*, p. 16. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 15.
† *Charge*, p. 19. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 18.

conceal that circumstance. First prove those epistles, as we now have them, to be the genuine writings of Ignatius, and then make all the use of them that you can.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

Of the Distinction between the Ebionites and the Nazarenes.

DEAR SIR,

IT has been imagined by some, that there was a difference between the doctrine of the *Ebionites* and that of the *Nazarenes*, concerning the person of Christ; the former disbelieving the miraculous conception, and the latter maintaining it; whereas I have said that I can find no sufficient authority for that difference; that which has been thought to have been the peculiar opinion of the *Nazarenes*, being expressly ascribed to one branch of the *Ebionites*, by *Origen*, *Eusebius*, *Epiphanius*, and perhaps other ancient writers.

And, as to any *Nazarenes* who believed that Christ was any thing more than man, I find no trace of them in history; so that it is highly probable that the Nazarenes of the second century were the same people with those of the first, or the primitive *Jewish Christians*, and that they were called *Ebionites* by way of reproach.

To the arguments from *Origen* and *Eusebius* you say nothing, but with respect to that from *Epiphanius* your conduct is very particular indeed. On my saying that "Epiphanius expressly says that Ebion held the same opinion with the Nazarenes,"* you say, "The only inference to be made from this assertion is this: that Dr. Priestley hath never troubled himself to read more of Epiphanius's account of the Ebionites than the first eleven words of the first sentence. Had he redde the first sentence to the end, he would have found that Ebion, although he rose from the school of the Nazarenes, and held similar opinions, preached also other doctrines, of which he was the first inventor. Among these novelties, by the consent of all antiquity, though not with Dr. Priestley's leave, we place the mere humanity of Christ, with or without the miraculous conception."†

I shall not return your offensive language; but had you yourself read the second paragraph in this section, you

* See *supra*, p. 10. † *Charge*, p. 77. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 79, 80.

would have found that your remark had no foundation whatever. For it there appears, that though, according to this writer, the *Ebionites* and *Nazarenes* did differ in some other particulars, it was not with respect even to the miraculous conception, much less with respect to the doctrine of the mere humanity of Christ.

He says, in the middle of the first section, "that Ebion," whom in the 24th section he makes to be contemporary with the apostle John, "borrowed his abominable rites from the Samaritans, his opinion (γνωμην) from the Nazarenes, his name from the Jews,* &c." And he says, in the beginning of the second section, "he was contemporary with the former, and had the same origin with them; and first he asserted that Christ was born of the commerce and seed of man, namely Joseph, as we signified above," referring to the first words of his first section, "when we said that in other respects he agreed with them all, and differed from them only in this, viz. in his adherence to the laws of the Jews with respect to the Sabbath, circumcision, and other things that were enjoined by the Jews and Samaritans. He moreover adopted many more things than the Jews, in imitation of the Samaritans,"† the particulars of which he then proceeds to mention.

In the same section he speaks of the *Ebionites* inhabiting the same country as the *Nazarenes*, and adds that, "agreeing together, they communicated of their perverseness to each other."‡ Then, in the third section, he observes that afterwards some of the *Ebionites* entertained a different opinion concerning Christ, than that he was the son of Joseph; supposing that, after *Elxæus* joined them, they learned of him "some fancy concerning Christ and the holy spirit.§"

Concerning the *Nazarenes*, in the seventh section of his account of them, he says that they were Jews in all respects,

* Σαμαρειτων μεν γαρ εχει το βδελυρον, Ιουδαιων δε το ονομα, Οσσαιων δε και Ναζωριων και Νασαραιων την γνωμην—και Χριστιανων βουλεται εχειν την προσηγοριαν. *Hær.* xxx. Sect. i. p. 125, I. edit. Paris, 1622. (*P.*)

† Ούτος γαρ ὁ Εβιων συγχρονος μεν τουτων ὑπηρχεν, απ' αυτων δε συν αυτοις ὁρμαται· τα πρωτα δε εκ παρατριβης και σπερματος ανδρος, τουτεστι του Ιωσηφ, τον Χριστον γεγενησθαι ελεγεν, ὡς και ηδη ἡμιν προειρηται, ὁτι τα ισα τοις αλλοις εν ἁπασι φρονων, εν τουτῳ μονῳ διεφερετο, εν τῳ νομῳ του Ιουδαϊσμου προσανεχειν, κατα σαββατισμον, και κατα την περιτομην, και κατα τα αλλα παντα ὁσα περ παρα Ιουδαιοις και Σαμαρειταις επιτελειται· ετι δε πλειω ούτος παρα τους Ιουδαιους ὁμοιως τοις Σαμαρειταις διαπραττεται. *Ibid.* Sect. ii. pp. 125, 126. (*P.*)

‡ Ενθεν αρχεται της κακης αυτου διδασκαλιας, ὁθεν δηθεν και οἱ Ναξαρηνοι οἱ ανομοι προδεδηλωνται. Συναφθεις γαρ ούτος εκεινοις, και εκεινοι τουτῳ, ἑκατερος απο της ἑαυτου μοχθηριας τῳ ἑτερῳ μετεδωκε. *Ibid.* (*P.*)

§ Φαντασιαν τινα περι Χριστου διηγειται, και περι πνευματος ἁγιου. *Ibid.* Sect. iii. p. 127. (*P.*)

except " that they believed in Christ; but I do not know whether they held the miraculous conception or not."* This amounts to no more than a doubt, which he afterwards abandoned, by asserting that the *Ebionites* held the same opinion concerning Christ with the *Nazarenes*, which opinion he expressly states to be their belief, that Jesus was a mere man, and the son of Joseph.

I now appeal to yourself whether this does not abundantly justify my quoting the authority of *Epiphanius*, whatever that may be, in support of the *Ebionites* and *Nazarenes* having held the same opinion concerning Christ, though they might differ in other things. Please also to observe, that these *Nazarenes* were prior to *Ebion*, who was himself contemporary with the apostle John.

You acknowledge that " in Jerome's time" the *Nazarenes* were " declined so far from the pure faith of the first race of Christians," and " were become heretical in that degree, that Jerome considered them as a Jewish sect, rather than a Christian."† How much earlier this general defection took place, you do not say. It appears, however, as you do not deny, that the unbelieving Jews called all those of their race who were Christians, by the name of *Ebionites*, in the time of *Origen*. Indeed, Origen's own words are too express to admit any doubt of this. " Those," says he, " of the Jews who believe that Jesus is the Christ, are called Ebionites."‡ And these *Ebionites*, Origen says, were of *two sorts*, one of them believing the miraculous conception, and the other not; but all of them considering Christ as a mere man.

You say, indeed, " that the word Ebionite had, in his *(Origen's)* time, outgrown its original meaning;" for " at last, it seems, the Nazarenes, whose error was rather a superstitious severity in their practice, than any deficiency in their faith, were included by Origen in the infamy of the appellation."§ But for this I must require some other evidence than your bare conjecture; for then he ought to have made *three* sorts of *Ebionites*, and not *two* only, which he expressly does.

* Περι Χριστου δε ουκ οιδα ειπειν ει και αυτοι, τη των προειρημενων περι Κηρινθον και Μηρινθον μοχθηρια αχθεντες, ψιλον ανθρωπον νομιζουσιν· η, καθως ἡ αληθεια εχει, δια πνευματος ἁγιου γεγενησθαι εκ Μαριας διαξεβαιουνται. *Hær.* xxix. Sect. vii. p. 123. *(P.)*

† *Charge*, p. 29. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 29.

‡ Εβιωναιοι χρηματιζουσιν οἱ απο Ιουδαιων τον Ιησον ὡς Χριστον παραδιξαμενοι. *In Celsum*, L. ii. p. 56. *(P.)*

§ *Charge*, p 35. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 35.

That the *Ebionites* comprised all the *Jewish Christians* in the time of Origen, is evident from the passage which you yourself quote from him: "—and when you consider what belief they of the Jewish race, who believe in Jesus, entertain of the Redeemer, some thinking that he took his being from Mary and Joseph, some, indeed, from Mary only and the Divine Spirit, but still without any belief of his divinity, you will understand," &c.* Now I do not at all see how, allowing the object of *Origen*, in the place in which this passage is introduced, to be the *spiritualizing of a plain story*, you can be authorized to explain this otherwise than it is literally expressed. Whatever the discourse be, this is an incidental mention of a real fact in the course of it; and such is often the clearest of all evidences.

As to that reference to *Origen* which you say you are not able to trace,† it is exactly as I have made it,‡ in my edition of his works in *Latin;* and, in my opinion, abundantly answers the purpose for which it was adduced, as he there speaks of all the Jews who believed in Jesus, as thinking him to be either the son of Joseph and Mary, or of Mary and the Holy Spirit, which certainly comprises the opinion which had been thought to be peculiar to the *Nazarenes;* so that it is impossible that Origen should have imagined that the Nazarenes held an opinion concerning Christ that was not also held by some of the Ebionites. Moreover, as he is here speaking of the Jewish Christians *in general*, without making any exception, it is natural to infer, that he had never heard of any Jewish Christians besides those whom he elsewhere calls Ebionites, of the two sorts particularly specified by him; so that this passage is in effect the same with that which you have quoted, and proves more than I there quoted it for.

I have since procured *Huetius's* edition of Origen's *Commentaries* on the Scriptures, and find that the passage which you have quoted exactly corresponds to that which I had made use of. But the original *Greek* is more expressly to my purpose than the *Latin.*§

* *Charge*, p. 76. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 78.

† *Charge*, p. 75. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 77. ‡ See *supra*, p. 10.

§ *The old Latin Version:* "Et cum videris eos qui ex Judæis crediderunt in Jesum, aliquando quidem ex Maria et Joseph eum esse putantes; aliquando autem de sola Maria et spiritu sancto, videbis," &c. In *Matt.* Tract. 13. *Opera* Latine, II. p. 88.

The Greek of Huetius's Edition: Και επαν ιδης των απο Ιουδαιων πιστευοντων εις τον Ιησουν την περι του σωτηρος πιστιν, ότε μεν εκ Μαριας και του Ιωσηφ υιομενων αυτον ειναι,

In a passage not far distant from this, *Origen* considers the *Ebionites* in general as not believing the miraculous conception, while the Gentile Christians in general, though with some exceptions, believed that doctrine. "By the men," he says, "who blamed the blind man, who represents the Ebionites, (unbelievers in the miraculous conception,) we may understand the Gentiles, who, with few exceptions, think that Christ was born of the Virgin only."*

"That the Jewish converts were remarkably prone to the Ebionæan heresy, from which the Gentile churches in general were pure, is the most," you say, "that can be concluded from this passage, strengthened as it might be with another, somewhat to the same purpose, in the Commentaries upon St. John's Gospel. But what if it were proved that the whole sect of the Nazarenes was absorbed in the Ebionæan heresy, in the days of Origen? What evidence would that afford of the identity of the Nazarenes and the Ebionites in earlier times? And even that identity, if it were proved, what evidence would it afford, that the church of Jerusalem had been originally Unitarian under her first bishops of the circumcision?"†

I answer, that if the *Jewish Christians* were universally *Ebionites* in the time of *Origen*, the probability is, that they were very generally so in the time of the apostles; and, that their heresy, as it is called, did exist in the time of the apostles, is abundantly evident. Whole bodies of men do not very soon change their opinions. And if, as you allow, the Jewish Christians were distinguished by the name of *Nazarenes*, (whom I think I have proved to be the same with the Ebionites, who all believed Christ to be a mere man,) from the time that they were settled in the country beyond the sea of Galilee, you carry the opinions of the Ebionites, as universally held by the Jewish Christians, to the very age of the apostles; for they retired into that country on the approach of the Jewish war, about which time the apostles went off the stage.

Since all the Jewish Christians were called *Nazarenes*,

ὁτε δε εκ Μαριας μεν μονης και του Θειου πνευματος, ου μην και μετα της περι αυτου Θεολογιας, ωφει, &c. *Comment. in Matt.* ed. *Huetii*, I. p. 427, E. *(P.) Postscript to Letters*, 1783.

* Ζητω ει δυναται πολλους μεν ειπειν επιτιμωντας ινα σιωπηση τω Εβιωναιω και πτωχευοντι περι την εις Ιησουν πιστιν, τους απο των εθνων, οἱ τινες παῤ ολιγους ἁπαντες πεπιστευκασιν αυτον εκ παρθενου γεγενησθαι. *Comment. in Matt.* ed. *Huetii*, I. p. 428, C. *(P.) Postscript to Letters*, 1783.

† *Charge*, p. 77. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 79.

or *Ebionites*, and all the writers that mention them speak of the doctrine of those sects *in general*, and not those *of their own time* in particular, as being that Christ was a mere man; the natural inference is, that those sects, or the Jewish Christians, did, *in all times*, after they became so distinguished, (which is allowed to have been just before or presently after the destruction of Jerusalem,) hold that doctrine. And supposing this to have been the case, is it not almost certain, that the apostles themselves must have taught it? Can it be supposed that the whole Jewish church should have abandoned the doctrine of the divinity of Christ within so few years after the death of the apostles, if they had ever received it from them? As far as I yet see, *Jewish Christians*, who were not *Nazarenes* or *Ebionites*, or Nazarenes who held any other doctrine concerning Christ than that he was a mere man, are unknown in history, and have no existence but in imagination.

That those who were called *Nazarenes* were as far from thinking Christ to be God as the *Ebionites*, is evident from the most unexceptionable evidence. Among others is the testimony of *Theodoret*, though, not having the original, I am obliged to quote it at second hand. This I shall do from Suicer's *Thesaurus*, under the article *Ebion*. He says, "The Nazarenes are Jews, who respect Christ as a righteous man."* And *Theodoret* lived in Syria, where he had the best opportunity of being acquainted with the state of the Jewish churches.

It is rather extraordinary that such a point should now be made of finding some difference of importance between the *Nazarenes* and the *Ebionites*, when no critic, I believe, of any name in the last age pretended to find any. The learned *Jeremiah Jones*, after disposing in opposite columns all that he could collect concerning them both, from the best authorities, concludes with saying, "It is plain there was a very great agreement between these two ancient sects; and though they went under different names, yet they seem only to differ in this, that the Ebionites had made some addition to the old Nazarene system. For Origen tells us they were called Ebionites, who from among the Jews owned Jesus to be the Christ."† The running title of this chapter is, *The Nazarenes and Ebionites the same.*

* Οἱ δε Ναζωραιοι Ιουδαιοι εισι τον Χριστον τιμωντες ὡς ανθρωπον δικαιον. (*P.*)
† *Jones on the Canon*, 1726, I. p. 386. (*P.*)

As to the general testimony of *Eusebius* and other writers, themselves believers in the divinity of Christ, that the church of Jerusalem towards the close of the apostolic age, (for it is not pretended that the apostles taught that doctrine clearly, and therefore not with effect, at the opening of their commission,) was orthodox in their sense of the word, it is not to be regarded, unless they bring some sufficient proof of their assertion. They were, no doubt, willing to have it thought so; and, without considering it very particularly, might presume that it was so: but the facts which they themselves record, and the account which they give of the conduct of the apostles in divulging this doctrine to the Jews, make it highly improbable that the case should have been as in general terms they assert.

They furnish as particular evidence against their own general testimony, as we can expect to find at this distance of time, supposing the fact to have been the reverse of what they assert; and the state of things in after times, and even in their own, was such as can never be accounted for, agreeably to the known principles of human nature, on the supposition that it was originally such as they represent it to be. The general prevalence of the Unitarian doctrine among the common people in the *Gentile* world, and the universal prevalence of it among the *Jews*, from the time that they were distinguished by the name of *Ebionites*, or *Nazarenes*, (which was immediately after the age of the apostles,) is totally inconsistent with the idea of the divinity of Christ having been the universal or the general opinion in the time of the apostles.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

That the Primitive Unitarians were not considered as Heretics.

DEAR SIR,

AMONG the "extravagant assertions," as you call them, of *Daniel Zwicker*, and which you say were adopted by *Episcopius*, you mention, "that the opinion of the meer humanity of Christ had prevailed very generally in the first ages; and was never deemed heretical by the fathers of the orthodox persuasion, at least not in such degree as to exclude them from the communion of the church." But you say that *Episcopius*, from his "charitable temper,—gave

easy credit to Unitarian writers, when they represented the differences of opinion in the early churches, as much greater than ever really obtained, and the tenderness for sectaries as more than was ever practised."*

If I was disposed to copy your usual language to me upon this occasion, I might have full scope; as what you now advance is the very reverse of the fact; and how you came to misapprehend so plain a case, concerning which, I believe, no writers of ecclesiastical history ever differed, I do not take upon me to say, but leave others to judge. That there were as proper *Unitarians* in the very age of the apostles, as any who are so termed at this day, (myself by no means excepted,) and differing as much from what is now called the orthodox faith, I will venture to say was never questioned; and that these ancient Unitarians were not then expelled from Christian societies as heretics, is, I believe, as generally allowed. It was, as you say, acknowledged by *Episcopius* the *Arian*,† and it is likewise allowed by *Mosheim* the *Trinitarian*, who says, "However ready many may have been to embrace this erroneous doctrine, it does not appear that this sect formed to themselves a separate place of worship, or removed themselves from the ordinary assemblies of Christians."‡ But does it not also follow from the same fact, that these Unitarians were not expelled from Christian societies by others, as they certainly would have been if they had been considered as heretics?

At the same time, the *Gnostics* were in a very different predicament, and had been so from the beginning. Mosheim says, "From several passages of the Sacred Writings it evidently appears, that, even in the first century, the general meeting of Christians was deserted, and separate assemblies formed, in several places, by persons infected with the Gnostic heresy; though," he adds, "this pernicious sect was not conspicuous for its number or its reputation before the time of Adrian."§

"Every heretic," says *Jerome*, "is born in the church, but is cast out of the church, and fights against the church."‖ *Austin* says, "As soon as any heresy existed,

* *Charge*, p. 7. *(P.)* *Tracts*, pp. 7, 8.

† Dr. Horsley says, "No Socinian." See *supra*, p. 16.

‡ *Hist. Eccles.* I. p. 191. *(P.)* Cent. ii. Pt. ii. Ch. v. Sect. xx.

§ *Hist. Eccles.* I. p. 108. *(P.)* Cent. i. Pt. ii. Ch. v. Sect. iii.

‖ "Omnis enim hæreticus nascitur in ecclesia, sed de ecclesia projicitur, et contendit et pugnat contra parentem." In *Jerem.* xxii., IV. p. 277. *(P.)*

it separated itself from the Catholic church."* *Tertullian* says, "If they be heretics, they cannot be Christians."†

That *Tertullian* did not consider Unitarians as excluded from the name and the assemblies of Christians, is evident from what he says concerning the *Apostles' Creed*, the several articles of which, as it stood in his time, he recites; asserting that it was the only proper standard of faith, and that the church admitted of a variety of opinions in other respects.

Now it is evident that no article in that creed alludes to the opinions of the *Unitarians*, but only to those of the *Gnostics*. This was the oldest formulary of Christian faith, and what was taught to all Catechumens before baptism; and additions were made to it from time to time, in order to exclude heretics. This creed any Unitarian, at least one who believed the miraculous conception, might subscribe in the time of *Tertullian*, and therefore could not then have been deemed a heretic.

"The rule of faith," he says, "is only one, admitting of no change or emendation, requiring us to believe in one God, almighty, the maker of the world; and in his son Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, raised from the dead on the third day, received up into heaven, now sitting at the right hand of the Father, and who will come again to judge the living and the dead, even by the resurrection of the flesh. This law of faith remaining, other things, being matters of discipline and conduct, admit of new corrections, the grace of God co-operating."‡

The *Ebionites*, being Jews, had little communication with

* "Statim enim unaquæque hæresis ut existebat, et à congregatione Catholicæ communionis exibat," &c. *De Baptismo, contra Donastistas*, L. v. C. xix. VII. p. 446. *(P.)*

† "Si enim hæretici sunt, Christiani esse non possunt." *De Præscriptione Hæreticorum*, Sect. xxxvii. p. 215.

Tertullian, in his treatise *De Præscriptione Hæreticorum*, makes but slight mention of the heresy of the *Ebionites*, and when he gives it that appellation, he makes it to consist in the "observance and defence of circumcision and the law;" and yet he represents *Ebion* as comprised under the description of *Antichrist* by St. *John*, p. 214. It is evident, however, from his making the Unitarians to be the *greater part* of believers, that, in his time, they were not considered as so far *heretical*, or *antichristian*, as to be excluded from Christian churches. *(P.)*

‡ "Regula quidem fidei una omnino est, sola, immobilis, et irreformabilis, credendi scilicet in unicum Deum, omnipotentem, mundi conditorem, et filium ejus Jesum Christum, natum ex virgine Maria, crucifixum sub Pontio Pilato, tertia die resuscitatum à mortuis, receptum in cælis, sedentem nunc ad dextram Patris, venturum judicare vivos et mortuos, per carnis etiam resurrectionem. Hac lege fidei manente, cætera jam disciplinæ et conversationis admittunt novitatem correctionis, operante scilicet et proficiente usque ad finem gratiâ Dei." *De Virginibus velandis*, Sect. i. p. 173. *(P.)*

the Gentiles, and therefore, of course, held separate assemblies; but the *Alogi*, who held the same doctrine among the Gentiles, had no separate assemblies, but worshipped along with other Christians. Indeed, their having no general distinct name before the time of *Epiphanius*, is of itself a proof that they had no separate places of worship, as the *Gnostics* and other heretics had; for, had they been distinguished from other Christians in their assemblies, it is impossible but they must have been distinguished by a *specific name*. They had, indeed, in particular places, names given them occasionally, from particular persons, who distinguished themselves by the defence of their doctrines, as *Artemonites*, *Noetians*, &c., but the general body of Unitarians among the Gentiles had no name given them *from the beginning* to distinguish them from other Christians, till the attempt made by *Epiphanius* to call them *Alogi*. In controversy they sometimes distinguished themselves by the name of *Monarchists*, as holding the monarchy or supremacy of the Father, in opposition to those who maintained the divinity of the Son; but this was only an occasional, and not an original or permanent appellation.

All therefore that *Chrysostom* could allege in proof of himself and his friends being of the orthodox faith, and no heretics, might have been alleged by the body of Unitarians before the time of *Theodotus*. Teaching unbelievers how to distinguish between orthodox Christians and sectaries, he says, "They have some persons by whom they are called. According to the name of the heresiarch, so is the sect; but no man has given us a name, but the faith itself." Again he says, "Were we ever separated from the church? Have we heresiarchs? Have we any name from men, as *Marcion* gave his name to some, *Manichæus* to others, and *Arius* to a third part?" &c.*

All this agrees remarkably well with the supposition, that these Unitarians were originally nothing less than the whole body of Christians, and that the Trinitarians were the innovators; appearing at first modest and candid, as was natural while they were a small minority, but bold and imperious when they became the majority.

It has been sufficiently observed with what respect Justin

* Εκεινοι εχουσι τινας αφ' ὧν καλουνται, αυτου του αἱρεσιαρχου δηλονοτι το ονομα, και ἑκαστη αἱρεσις ὁμοιως· παρ' ἡμιν ανηρ μεν ουδεις εδωκεν ἡμιν ονομα, ἡ δε πιστις αυτη. *Chrysost. in Acta Apost.* Cap. xv. *Hom.* xxxiii. VIII. p. 613.

Μη γαρ απεστχισμεθα της εκκλησιας; μη γαρ αἱρεσιαρχας εχομεν; μη γαρ ὑπ' ανθρωπων καλουμεθα; μη γαρ προηγουμενος ἡμων τις εστιν, ὡσπερ τῳ μεν Μαρκιων, τῳ δε Μανιχαιος, τῳ δε Αρειος, τῳ δε αλλος τις αἱρεσεως αρχηγος; *Ibid.* p. 661. (*P.*)

Martyr treats the ancient Unitarians, evdiently shewing that in his time his own doctrine stood in need of an *apology*. There are two passages in this writer, in which he speaks of *heretics* with great indignation, as "not Christians, but as persons whose tenets were absurd, impious and blasphemous, with whom Christians held no communion;" but in both the passages he evidently had a view to the *Gnostics only*, denominated from the name of their teachers. He particularly mentions the "*Marcionites*, the *Valentinians*, the *Basilideans*, and the *Saturninians*." He says, "they blasphemed the Maker of the world, and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," that "they denied the resurrection, and maintained that, after death, the soul went immediately to heaven. Do not," says he, "suppose these to be Christians."* Had he considered the *Unitarians*, with whom he appears to have been well acquainted, as heretics, would he not have mentioned or alluded to their tenets also in those passages in which he speaks, and pretty largely, of the Christian heretics in general? It is impossible, I should think, to read those passages, as they stand in the original, introduced as a fulfilment of our Saviour's prophecy, that there should be false Christs and false prophets, who should deceive many, and not be satisfied that (like the apostle John) Justin Martyr had no idea of there being any *heretics* in the Christian church, in his time, besides the *Gnostics*.†

How little is it that Irenæus says of the Ebionites, and with how little severity, in his large treatise concerning heresy! It is little more than one page out of four hundred, while all the rest is employed on the different branches of

* Εισιν ουν και εγενοντο, ω φιλοι ανδρες, πολλοι, οι αθεα και βλασφημα λεγειν και πραττειν εδιδαξαν, εν ονοματι τε Ιησε προσελθοντες· και εισιν υφ' ημων απο της προσωνυμιας των ανδρων εξ ων εκαστη διδαχη και γνωμη ηρξατο· (αλλοι γαρ κατ' αλλον τροπον βλασφημειν τον ποιητην των ολων, και τον υπ' αυτε προφητευομενον ελειτεσθαι Χριτον, και τον Θεον Αβρααμ, και Ισαακ, και Ιακωβ, διδασκησιν· ων ουδενι κοινωνεμεν, οι γνωριζοντες αθεες και ασεβεις και αδικες και ανομες αυτης υπαρχοντας, και αντι τε τον Ιησην σεβειν, ονοματι μονον ομολογειν· και Χριτιανες εαυτες λεγουσιν, ον τροπον, οι εν τοις εθνεσι το ονομα τε Θεε επιγραφησι τοις χειροποιητοις, και ανομοις και αθεοις τελεταις κοινωνεσι·) και εισιν αυτων οι μεν τινες καλεμενοι Μαρκιανοι, οι δε Ουαλεντινιανοι, οι δε Βασιλιδεανοι, οι δε Σατορνιλιανοι, και αλλοι αλλω ονοματι, απο τε αρχηγετε της γνωμης εκαστος ονομαζομενος, &c. *Dialog.* ed. Thirlby, p. 208.

Πολλες δ' αι, και των της καθαρας και ευσεβες οντων Χριτιανων γνωμης τετο μη γναριζειν, εσημανα σοι· της γαρ λεγομενης μεν Χριτιανης, οντας δε αθεες, και ασεβεις αιρεσιωτας, ότι κατα παντα βλασφημα, και αθεα, και ανοητα διδασκησιν εθηλωσα σοι.—Ει γαρ και συνεβαλετε υμεις τισι λεγομενοις Χριτιανοις, και τετο μη ομολογησιν, αλλα και βλασφημειν τολμωσι τον Θεον Αβρααμ, και τον Θεον Ισαακ, και τον Θεον Ιακωβ, οι και λεγωσι με ειναι νεκρων αναστασιν, αλλα αμα τω αποθνησκειν τας ψυχας αυτων αναλαμβανεσθαι εις τον ηρανον, μη υπολαβητε αυτες Χριτιανες. *Ibid.* p. 311. (*P.*)

† See *ibid.* p. 208; *pars secunda*, p. 311. (*P.*) See *Appendix*, No. IV.

Gnosticism. The harshest epithet that he applies to them is that of *vani*, which, considering the manner of the ancients, is certainly very moderate. *Vani autem et Ebionæi.** He says, indeed, that "God will judge them," and "how can they be saved, if it be not God that worked out their salvation upon earth?"† But this is no sentence of damnation passed upon them in particular for holding their doctrine, but an argument used by him to refute them;‡ and is the same as if he had said, Mankind in general could not be saved, if Christ had not been God as well as man.

§ Clemens Alexandrinus makes frequent mention of *heresies.* A great part‖ of his seventh book of *Stromata* relates to that subject. He mentions fourteen different heresiarchs by name, and ten heresies by character; but none of them bear any relation to the *Ebionites*, or any species of Unitarians, all of them respecting *Gnostics* only. He particularly speaks of the *pride* of heretics in general in pretending to deep science; whereas the *Ebionites* were always described in a very different manner, and were generally treated with contempt as well as abhorrence. On the other hand, *Whitby* says, that this writer speaks of the doctrine of the *Logos* being emitted from the Father at pleasure, and recalled into him again, (which *Justin Martyr* mentions, and which was hardly different from proper Unitarianism, being the doctrine of *Noetus*, *Praxeas*, *Sabellius*, and *Marcellus* of Ancyra,) with approbation. He also says it is particularly remarkable that *Justin Martyr*, though he did not approve

* L. v. C. i. p. 394. *(P.)*

† L. iv. C. lix. p. 358. *(P.)*

‡ That Irenæus did not mean to pass a sentence of what we should now call *damnation* upon the Ebionites is, I think, evident from what he says concerning them in the twenty-first chapter of his third book, and which has the appearance of great harshness. "If they persist," he says, "in their error, not receiving the word of incorruption, they continue in mortal flesh, and are subject to death, not receiving the antidote of life." *Non recipientes verbum incorruptionis perseverant in carne mortali, et sunt debitores mortis, antidotum vitæ non accipientes.* (L. iii. C. xxi. p. 248.)

The idea of this writer, and that of the fathers in general, was, that Christ recovered for man that immortality which Adam had lost; so that without his interference the whole race of mankind must have perished in the grave. This he represents as the punishment of the Ebionites. But he certainly could not mean that the Ebionites, *as such*, should continue in the grave, while all the rest of mankind should rise from the dead. He must, therefore, have meant, not that they in particular, but that mankind in general, could have had no resurrection, if their doctrine had been true. *(P.)* *Postcript* to *Letters*, 1783.

§ This paragraph is inserted from the P. S. to *Letters*, 1783.

‖ Altered in Dr. Priestley's corrections from *almost the whole.* "Dr. Horsley, in his Reply, Letter x., shews that it is but a very small proportion of the seventh book of Stromata which relates to heresies." Mr. Belsham's *Note* to Dr. Priestley's *Tracts*, 1815. See Dr. Horsley's Tracts, pp. 185—188.

of this doctrine, passes it without any censure or mark of heresy.*

There is no instance, I believe, of any person having been excommunicated for being an Unitarian before *Theodotus*, by *Victor*, bishop of Rome, the same that excommunicated all the Eastern churches because they would not celebrate Easter on the day that he prescribed. Whereas, had the universal church been Trinitarian from the beginning, would not the first Unitarians, the first broachers of a doctrine so exceedingly offensive to them, as in all ages it has ever been, have experienced their utmost indignation, and have been expelled from all Christian societies with horror?

What makes it more particularly evident that the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ was not thought deserving of excommunication in early times, is, that though the *Ebionites* were *anathematized*, as Jerome says, or excommunicated, it was not on account of their denying the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, but *only* on account of their rigid observance of the Mosaic law.† Had you, Sir, been appointed to draw up a form of excommunication for *Socinus*, would you have confined your charge of heresy to his refusing to baptize infants, or his maintaining the unlawfulness of bearing arms?‡ The principal article would certainly have been his believing, with the *Ebionites*, that Christ was nothing more than a man.

Such a doctrine as that of the simple humanity of Christ,

* "Sententiam hancce, quam post Noetum et Praxeam, Sabellius propugnavit, Clementi Alexandrino ex pædagogia sua placuisse non sine ratione existimo."—*Disquisitiones Modestæ*, p. 173. *(P.)*

† "Si hoc verum est, in Cherenti et Hebionis hæresim dilabimur, qui, credentes in Christo, propter hoc *solum* à patribus anathematizati sunt, quod legis cæremonias Christi evangelio miscuerunt, et sic nova confessi sunt ut vetera non amitterent." *Hieronymus Augustino*, Ep. lxxxix. I. p. 634.

I have not been able to find any particular account of this *excommunication of the Ebionites by the fathers*, mentioned by *Jerome*; but I think it very possible that it might have been nothing more than what was done by *Victor*, bishop of Rome, when he excommunicated all the Eastern churches (of whom the *Ebionites* were the chief) because they observed the Jewish rules in fixing the time of Easter; so that in this excommunication no mention might be made of any other tenet or custom of theirs, besides this instance of their obstinate adherence to Judaism. The rule laid down by Victor was afterwards confirmed by the Council of Nice, but I believe without any sentence of excommunication on those who did not conform to it. If any person will give me any more light with respect to this subject, I shall be truly thankful for it. *(P.)*

The last paragraph is inserted from the P. S. to *Letters*, 1783.

‡ On the question "Whether it were lawful for a Christian to exercise magistracy and bear arms—one upon which the Unitarians on the continent were greatly divided in opinion—Socinus's sentiments" were "in support of the affirmative." Dr. T. Rees's *Racov. Cat.* pp. 178, 179, *Note*. See Toulmin's *Socinus*, pp. 235—239.

in a church universally Trinitarian, must necessarily have given greater alarm, and have roused the orthodox to exert more vigorous measures than the same doctrine could do in the time of *Calvin*, when it was far from being novel; and yet he, though exposed to persecution himself, thought it to be a crime for which burning alive was no more than an adequate punishment; and almost all the Christian world justified his using that rigour with respect to *Servetus*. Now, since the minds of men are in all ages similarly affected in similar circumstances, we may conclude, that the Unitarian doctrine, which was treated with so much respect when it was first mentioned, was in a very different predicament then, from what it was at the time of the Reformation. The difference of *majority* and *minority*, and nothing else, can account for this difference of treatment.

You will say, if the great majority of Christians in early times were Unitarians, why did not they excommunicate the innovating Trinitarians? I answer, that the doctrine of the Trinity was not, in its origin, such as could give much alarm, as I have explained in my *Reply to the Monthly Reviewers*,* and before it became very formidable there was a great majority of the learned and philosophizing clergy on its side. However, that it did give very great alarm, as it began to unfold itself, I have brought undeniable evidence.

What words, in any language, can express more alarm or dislike than *expavescere* and *scandalizare*, by which *Tertullian* describes their feelings on this subject? And *Origen* has some equally strong in Greek, as ταραττειν, &c. Had the Unitarians in those times been *writers*, we should probably have heard more of their complaints. At present we know nothing of them besides what we are able to collect concerning them from their adversaries, who thought it necessary to make frequent apologies to them.

On the other hand, there is indisputable evidence that the Unitarian doctrine, and even in its most obnoxious form, existed in the very time of the apostles. The Jewish Christians in general, not only thought that Christ was a *mere man*, but even that he was the son of Joseph; and the gradation that you speak of, from the doctrine of the Ebionites in the time of St. John, to that of Theodotus in the time of Victor, has no existence but in your own single imagination. And yet these Unitarians were respected, and not expelled from Christian societies, by the orthodox

* See *supra*, p. 14.

of that age. Explain this fact, in consistence with their not being the majority of Christians, if you can.

At this day, as the Unitarian doctrine happily gains ground among Christians, the horror with which it has been considered is manifestly very much abated. Your treatment of me, and of all who hold the same opinion, is rather extraordinary, considering the times in which we live; but it is mild and moderate compared with the usual treatment of the same doctrine, even in this tolerant country, a hundred, or even fifty years ago.

At the time of the *Revolution* it was made *blasphemy* by act of parliament openly to avow what I now openly defend,* and was punishable with confiscation of goods and imprisonment for life, if persisted in; and the law still [1783] remains unrepealed.† But it is seen to be so arbitrary and unjust, (as directed against those who conscientiously believe in one God only, without acknowledging three persons to be that one God,) that no one dares to put it in execution; and the state, I am confident, only waits for that application which, I trust, will be made to relieve them, and to wipe off such a disgrace from our statutes.

LETTER IV.

Of the Inference that may be drawn from the Passage of Athanasius, concerning the Opinion of the early Jewish Christians relating to Christ.

DEAR SIR,

As one argument that the primitive church of *Jerusalem* "was properly Unitarian, maintaining the simple humanity

* "July 5, 1698, King William gave the royal assent to an act for the more effectually suppressing blasphemy and profaneness." On February 17, preceding, there had been "An Address of the Commons for a Proclamation against Immorality and Profaneness, and for suppressing all pernicious Books and Pamphlets containing Doctrines against the Holy Trinity, and other fundamental Articles of Faith, and for punishing the Authors and Publishers; and a Proclamation was issued accordingly the 24th Instant." Salmon's *Chron. Hist.* 1747, pp. 291, 292, 293. See Vol. V. p. 433; X. p. 488; XV. p. 391, *Note* *.

† "Happily," says Mr. Belsham, "we live in better times; and have been witnesses to the repeal of those barbarous laws which were a disgrace to the statute book; which inflicted pains and penalties horrible to think of upon the conscientious worshippers of the one God, the Father only; which repeal was sanctioned by the unanimous decision of the legislature, with the approbation of all good men, and without a single dissentient voice from the right reverend Bench. Though it is equally wonderful and lamentable to think that one of the learned prelates [Dr. Burgess] has since disgraced himself and his order, by calling upon the legislature to re-enact these inhuman statutes." *Preface* to Dr. Priestley's *Tracts*, 1815, pp. vii. viii. See Vol. X. p. 495; XV. p. 391, *Note* *.

of Christ," I observed, that "Athanasius himself was so far from denying, that he endeavours to account for it by saying that 'all the Jews were so firmly persuaded that their Messiah was to be nothing more than a man like themselves, that the apostles were obliged to use great caution in divulging the doctrine of the proper divinity of Christ.'"*

This I maintain to be a short but true state of the case. *Athanasius* both expressly allowed that the Jewish Christians were at first of the opinion that Christ was no more than a man; and he accounts for the apostles conniving at it, without saying how long that prudent connivance continued. In my *Appendix* you will find a somewhat fuller state of the argument.† I shall now distinctly consider all that you have advanced to invalidate the inference that I have made from this remarkable passage. I shall afterwards shew that it was not *Athanasius* only, but *Chrysostom* also, and, as he says, the *ancients, and the most distinguished fathers of the church*, who gave the same representation of the state of things in the apostolical age.

You say, that *Athanasius* is here speaking "of the unbelieving Jews."‡ The expression is οἱ τοτε Ιουδαιοι, the *Jews of that age;* which includes both the believing and unbelieving Jews. Had he been speaking of the Jews of his own time, it would, I own, have been probable that he meant the unbelieving Jews; but speaking, as he does, of the Jews at the very first promulgation of Christianity among them, it is most natural to suppose that he meant *all* the Jews. *Paul*, long after his conversion to Christianity, called himself a Jew. However, it will be sufficiently evident from the whole tenor of the passage, that he must have meant the believing Jews principally, and in some respects the believing Jews only, exclusive of the unbelieving ones. And in this construction of the passage I am by no means singular, but have the sanction of Trinitarians themselves.

But admitting that the Jews here meant were unbelieving Jews, they were such as the apostles wished to convert to Christianity, and many of them soon became Christians. How the apostles conducted themselves with respect to these men, first unbelieving and then believing Jews, *Athanasius* thus informs us. Our readers may judge of the fidelity of the translation by consulting the original in the

* Vol. V. p. 19. † See *Appendix*, No. I. *Par.* 6.
‡ *Charge*, p. 22. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 21.

margin; and as I only abridged the passage before, I shall now give a larger portion of it at full length, for the whole is much too large to transcribe. "Will they affirm that the apostles held the doctrine of *Arius*, because they say that Christ was a man of *Nazareth*, and suffered on the cross? Or, because they used these words, were the apostles of opinion that Christ was only a man, and nothing else? By no means: this is not to be imagined. But this they did as *wise master builders and stewards of the mysteries of God;* and they had this specious pretence for it. For the Jews of that age, being deceived themselves, and having deceived the Gentiles, thought that Christ was a mere man, only that he came of the seed of David, resembling other descendants of David, and did not believe either that he was God, or that the word was made flesh. On this account the blessed apostles, with *great prudence*, in the first place, taught what related to the humanity of our Saviour to the Jews; that having fully persuaded them, from his miraculous works, that Christ was come, they might afterwards bring them to the belief of his divinity, shewing that his works were not those of a man, but of God. For example, *Peter* having said that Christ was a man who had suffered, immediately added, *he is the prince of life.* In the gospel he confesses, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God; and in his epistle he calls him the *bishop of souls.*"*

Here, I think, are sufficient marks of great *caution*, and of the apostles leading their converts to the knowledge of the divinity of Christ, by very distant and uncertain *inferences* indeed, such as Jews, so previously persuaded as he represents them to have been, of the simple humanity of their *Messiah*, would not very readily understand.

Now, if this caution was requisite in the first instance, and with respect to the first converts that the apostles made,

* Ουδεν γαρ αυτοις ατολμητον, ότι και αυτοι οί αποστολοι τα Λρειϑ εφρονην· ανϑρωπον γαρ αυτον απο Ναζαρετ, και παϑητον τον Χριστον απαγγελλησιν, εκεινων τοινυν τοιαυτα φαντασιομενων, αρ' επειδη τοις ρημασι τητοις εχρησαντο, μονον ανϑρωπον ηδεισαν τον Χριστον οί αποστολοι, και πλεον ουδεν; μη γενοιτο· ουκ εστιν ουδε εις νην ποτε τητο λαβειν· αλλα και τητο ώς αρχιτεκτονες σοφοι, και οικονομοι μυστηριων Θεη πεποιηκασι· και την αιτιαν εχουσιν ευλογον· επειδη γαρ οί τοτε Ιϑδαιοι πλανηϑεντες τε και πλανησαντες Ελληνας, ενομιζον τον Χριστον ψιλον ανϑρωπον, μονον εκ σπερματος Δαβιδ ερχεσϑαι, καϑ' ομοιοτητα των εκ τη Δαβιδ αλλων γενομενων τεκνων· ουτε δε Θεον αυτον, ουδε ότι λογος σαρξ εγενετο επιστευον· τητω ένεκα, μετα πολλης της συνεσεως οί μακαριοι αποστολοι τα ανϑρωπινα τα σωτηρος εξηνεγκαντο πρωτον τοις Ιϑδαιοις, ίν' όλως πεισαντες αυτης, εκ των φαινομενων και γενομενων σημειων, ελληλυϑεναι τον Χριστον, λοιπον και εις την περι της Θεοτητος αυτη πιστιν αυτης αναγαγωσι, δεικνυντες ότι τα γενομενα εργα ουκ εστιν ανϑρωπου, αλλα Θεη· αμελει Πετρος ό λεγων ανδρα παϑητον τον Χριστον, ευθυς συνηπτεν Ούτος αρχηγος της ζωης εστιν, &c. &c. *De Sententia Dionysii, Athanasii Opera*, I. pp. 553, 554, ed. *Colon.* 1686. (*P.*) See *supra*, pp. 11, 17.

it was equally requisite with respect to the rest, at least for the sake of others who were not yet converted; unless the first should have been enjoined secrecy on that head. For whenever it had been known that the apostles were preaching not such a *Messiah* as they expected, viz. *a man like themselves*, but *the eternal God*, the difference was so great, that a general alarm must have been spread, and the conversion of the rest of the Jews (to a doctrine which must have appeared so highly improbable to them) must have been impeded. We may, therefore, presume that the apostles must have connived at this state of ignorance, concerning the divinity of Christ, in their Jewish converts, till there was little hope of making any further converts among the Jews, and till the gospel began to be preached to the Gentiles.

Indeed, this must have been the case, according to *Athanasius's* own account; for he says that these Jews, being in error themselves, led the Gentiles into the same error; for your notion, that by *Gentiles* our author here meant *proselytes of the gate*, is altogether arbitrary and improbable. Nay, the very existence of these proselytes of the gate, you must know, has been questioned, and I think fully disproved by Dr. Lardner and others. Besides, it is not to be supposed that the doctrine of a *Messiah* could have been very interesting to any besides native Jews, or, at the most, those that were complete proselytes; whereas to the Gentile Christians it was a matter of the greatest moment. By these Gentiles, therefore, I conclude that *Athanasius* must have meant *Christian Gentiles*, and consequently that by the Jews who led them into that mistake, he meant the believing and not the unbelieving Jews. The learned *Beausobre*, a Trinitarian, and therefore an unexceptionable judge in this case, quoting this very passage, does not hesitate to pronounce that they were believing Jews who were intended by the writer. "Ces Juifs," he says, "ne sont pas les Juifs incrédules, mais ceux qui faisoient profession du Christianisme."*

What I have respect to in this passage, is the obvious general tenor and spirit of it, and not particular words or phrases; or I might observe, that the *verbs* in that part of the passage which mentions *Christ being come of the seed of David*, and the *word being made flesh*, are not in the *future tense*, and therefore do not naturally refer to the *Messiah* in

* *Histoire de Manichéisme*, 1734, II. p. 517. *(P.)*

general, who *was to come*, but to a person who was *actually come*, that is, to Jesus Christ in particular. The Latin translator of *Athanasius*, a Catholic, and certainly no Unitarian, had so little suspicion of any other meaning, that he renders τον Χριστον in this place by *Jesum;* so that I am far from being singular, or particularly biassed by my own opinions, in my construction of this passage.

Supposing, however, not only the proselytes of the gate, but the whole body of the *Gentiles*, (little as they were concerned in the question,) to have been previously taught by the *Jews* that their *Messiah*, whenever he should come, would be nothing more than a man; if this was an opinion that they were as fully persuaded of as *Athanasius* represents the Jews, their teachers, to have been, the same caution must have been as necessary with respect to them as with respect to the Jews themselves, and for the same reason.

Athanasius must, therefore, be understood to say, that the Jewish converts, while (through the caution of the apostles) they were ignorant of the divinity of Christ, preached the gospel *in that state* to the Gentiles. And as he speaks of Gentiles *in general*, and without any respect to *time*, and also of their being actually brought over to that belief, it is impossible not to understand him of this caution being continued till the gospel had been fully preached to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Besides, one of the instances that *Athanasius* here gives of the preaching of the simple humanity of Christ, is taken from the discourse of the apostle *Paul* at *Athens*, which was about the year 53 after Christ; and indeed at this time the gospel had not been preached to any great extent among the Gentiles; for it was on this very journey that this apostle first preached the gospel in *Macedonia* and *Greece*.

If, according to *Athanasius*, the apostolical reserve with respect to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ continued till this time, (and he says nothing concerning the termination of it,) we may presume that this great doctrine, supposing it to have been known to the apostles, had not been publicly taught by them till very near the time of their dispersion and death; and then I think it must have come too late even from them; for it appears from the book of *Acts*, that their mere *authority* was not sufficient to overbear the prejudices of their countrymen. At least such an extraordinary communication of a doctrine of which they had no conception must have occasioned such an alarm and

consternation as we must have found some traces of in the history of the *Acts of the Apostles*. It could not have been received without hesitation and debate.

If we can suppose that the apostles, some time before their death, did communicate this great and unexpected doctrine, the effects of such communication must have been very transient; for, presently after the death of the apostles, we find all the Jewish Christians distinguished by the name of *Nazarenes* or *Ebionites*, and no trace of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ among them. If you can produce any evidence to the contrary, I hope you will do it. It certainly behoves you to do it if you can; for without this you will hardly make it appear probable that the apostles ever communicated such a doctrine at all.

You say, "With what readiness the apostles led their catechumens on, from the simplest principles to the highest mysteries; of this consummate ability of the apostles, in the capacity of teachers, Athanasius speaks with due commendation. Their *caution* he never mentions. On the contrary, the rapid progress of their instruction, how they passed at once from the detail of our Lord's life on earth, to the mystery of his Godhead, is one principal branch of his encomium. I wish that Dr. Priestley had produced the passage in which he thinks the apostles are taxed with caution."*

I have now produced the passage, and have pointed out a *word*, viz. συνεσις, which, in the connexion in which it stands, can bear no other sense than *caution*, and great caution (μετα πολλης συνεσεως); and I have likewise shewn, from the whole tenor of the discourse, that *Athanasius* could have intended nothing else than to describe their prudence or extreme caution, and to account for it. He evidently does not represent them as deferring the communication of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, on account of its being more conveniently taught afterwards, as part of a system of faith, but only lest it should have given offence to the Jews. If this *skill* or *prudence*, in these circumstances, be not the same thing with *caution*, I do not know what is meant by *caution*.

On the other hand, I find no trace of *rapidity* in this account of the apostles' conduct. All that approaches to it is, that, immediately after any mention of the humanity

* *Charge*, p. 25. *(P.) Tracts*, pp. 24, 25.

of Christ, (which he speaks of as necessary on account of the Jewish prejudices,) he says, the apostles subjoin some expression which might have led their hearers to the knowledge of his divinity; but the instances he produces are such as plainly confute any pretensions of their being a *distinct* and *full* declaration of that doctrine.

The first instance he gives us is from the speech of *Peter* to the Jews on the day of *Pentecost*, in which he says, *Acts* ii. 22, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know." In this *Athanasius* acknowledges that *Peter* preached the proper humanity of Christ, but says that *immediately* afterwards (referring to his discourse on the cure of the lame man in the Temple) he called him the *prince of life*, (*Acts* iii. 15,) "And killed the prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead."

Had the apostle meant that his audience should have understood him as referring to the divinity of Christ by that expression, his prudence must have lasted but a very short time indeed; probably not many days. If, therefore, his intention was, as *Athanasius* represents it, to preach the doctrine of the humanity of Christ *in the first place*, and not to divulge the doctrine of his divinity till they were *firmly persuaded of his Messiahship*, he could not *mean* to allude to his divinity in this speech, which was addressed not to the believing but to the unbelieving Jews. At least he could only have thought of doing it in such a manner as that his hearers might afterwards *infer* the doctrine from it; and it must have required great ingenuity, and even a strong prepossession in favour of the divinity of Christ, (the reverse of which this writer acknowledges,) to imagine that this expression of *prince of life*, which so easily admits of another interpretation, had any such reference. Moreover, in all the instances which *Athanasius* produces concerning the conduct of the apostles in this respect, from the book of *Acts*, he does not pretend to find one in which the divinity of Christ is *distinctly* preached, though he quotes four passages in which his humanity is plainly spoken of.

When all these things are considered, viz. that *Athanasius* acknowledged that it required great caution in the apostles to divulge the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and that the gospel was preached with success among the Gentiles while the Jews were ignorant of it; it can hardly be doubted but that he must himself have considered the Christian

church in general as Unitarian in the time of the apostles, at least till near the time of their dispersion and death.*

With respect to *Athanasius's* declared opinion on this subject, you say, "Now in this piece upon the orthodoxy of Dionysius, Athanasius no where, I confess, denies that the primitive church of Jerusalem was Unitarian. Nor, on the other hand, do I recollect that Dr. Priestley hath asserted it in any part of his History of Electricity."† Whether in my *History of Electricity*, or in this piece of *Athanasius*, in which he gives a large account of the conduct of the apostles with respect to their preaching the divinity of Christ, an account of the actual *effect* of such preaching might be more naturally expected, I leave to our readers. I should have thought that, if Athanasius *could* have added that, notwithstanding their caution in preaching this extraordinary doctrine, against which he acknowledges the Jews had the strongest prejudices, they nevertheless did preach it with effect, and that it was the general belief of the Jewish Christians in their time, he would not have thought it at all foreign to his purpose. It would certainly have favoured his great object in writing this piece, viz. the vindication of *Dionysius* in using a like caution with respect to the *Sabellians*, to have added, that this prudence or caution was not, in either of the two cases, finally detrimental to the cause of truth. I therefore consider the silence of Athanasius on this head as a negative argument of some weight; and upon the whole I think I have made it appear that Athanasius must have supposed that both the *Jewish* and *Gentile* churches were Unitarian in the time of the apostles, at least he enables us to infer that it must have been so; and this is quite sufficient for my argument.

That *Athanasius*, however, should actually consider the doctrine of the divinity of Christ as for some time unknown to the generality of Christians, in the age of the apostles, will be thought the less extraordinary, when it is observed that, like *Tertullian*, he acknowledged the Unitarian doctrine to be very prevalent among the lower class of people in his own time. He calls them the οἱ πολλοι, *the many*, and describes

* According to *Athanasius*, the Jews were to be well-grounded in the belief of Jesus being the Christ, before they could be taught the doctrine of his divinity. Now if we look into the book of *Acts*, we shall clearly see that they had not got beyond the first lesson in the apostolic age; the great burden of the preaching of the apostles being to persuade the Jews that *Jesus was the Christ*. That he was likewise *God*, they evidently left to their successors; who, indeed, did it most effectually, though it required a long course of time to do it. *(P.)*

† *Charge*, p. 21. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 21.

them as persons of "low understanding. Things that are sublime and difficult," he says, "are not to be apprehended except by faith; and ignorant people must fall, if they cannot be persuaded to rest in faith, and avoid curious questions."*

There can be no doubt, therefore, but that the doctrine of the Trinity was a long time very unpopular with the common people among Christians; and this is a fact that cannot be satisfactorily accounted for, but on the supposition that the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ was that which had been handed down to them by tradition from the apostles. It was not the doctrine of *Arius* that *Athanasius* is here complaining of, but that of *Paulus Samosatensis*, who was a proper Unitarian, believing that Christ had no existence before he was born of his mother Mary. The great popularity of *Photinus*, at and after this time, shews with what difficulty the common people were brought off from this doctrine; and also the confession of Austin, that he was of that opinion till he became acquainted with the writings of *Plato*.

It is not from *Athanasius* alone that we are informed of this cautious proceeding of the apostles in divulging the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. *Chrysostom* ascribes the same caution both to Christ himself and the apostles. "One reason," he says, "why Christ said so little of his own divinity was on account of the weakness of his auditors. Whenever he spake of himself as any thing more than man, they were tumultuous and offended; but when he spake with humility, and as a man, they ran to him and received his words."† Of this he gives many examples. "Our Saviour," he says, "never taught his own divinity in express words, but only by actions, leaving the fuller explication of it to his disciples. If," says he, "they (meaning the Jews) were so much offended at the addition of another law to their former, much more must they have been with the doctrine of his divinity."‡

* Λυπει δε και νυν της αντεχομενης της αγιας πιστεως, ή περι των αυτων βλασφημιων βλαπτησα της πολλης· μαλιστα της ηλαττωμενης περι την συνεσιν. Τα γαρ μεγαλα και δυσκαταληπτα των πραγματων πιστει τη προς τον Θεον λαμβανεται. Ὁθεν οἱ περι την γνωσιν αδυνατουντες απωπιπτουσιν, ει μη πειθοιεν εμμενειν τη πιστει, και τας περιεργους ζητησεις εκτρεπεσθαι. "De Incarnatione Verbi, contra Paulum Samosatensem," *Athanasii Opera*, I. p. 591. (*P.*)

† Ει ποτε τι της ανθρωπινης φυσεως ειπε πλεον, εθορυβαντο, και εσκανδαλιζοντο· ει δε τι ποτε ταπεινον, και ανθρωπινον, προσετρεχον, και τον λογον εδεχοντο. *Chrysost. Homil.* xxxii. I. p. 409. (*P.*)

‡ Δια δε τουτο ουδε περι της θεοτητος της εαυτου πανταχη φαινεται σαφως παιδευων. Ει γαρ ή νομου προσθηκη τοσουτον αυτους εθορυβει, πολλω μαλλον το θειον εαυτου αποφαινειν. *In caput Matt.* v. *Hom.* xvi. VII. p. 154. (*P.*)

Chrysostom ascribes the same caution to the apostles on this subject. He says that they concealed the doctrine of the miraculous conception on account of the incredulity of the Jews with respect to it; and that when they began to preach the gospel, they insisted chiefly on the resurrection of Christ.* With respect to the former, (and the same may no doubt be applied to the latter,) he says, he did not give "his own opinion only, but that which came by tradition from the fathers and eminent men. He therefore would not have his hearers to be alarmed, or think his account of it extraordinary."†

Thus, he says, that "it was not to give offence to the Jews that Peter, in his first speech to them, did not say that *Christ* did the wonderful works of which he spake, but that *God* did them by him; that by speaking more modestly he might conciliate them to himself."‡ The same caution he attributes to him, in "not saying that *Christ*, but that *God* spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, that by these means he might bring them gradually to the faith."§

I cannot help observing how extremely improbable is this account of the conduct of the apostles given by *Athanasius*, *Chrysostom*, and other orthodox fathers of the church, considering what we know of the character and the instructions of the apostles. They were plain men, and little qualified to act the cautious part here ascribed to them; and their instructions certainly were to teach all that they knew, even what their Master communicated to them in the greatest privacy.‖ Whereas, upon this scheme, they must have

* *Matt.* cap. i. *Hom.* iii. VII. p. 20. *(P.)*

† Αλλα μη θορυβεισθε προς το παραδοξον του λεγομενε· ου δε γαρ εμος ὁ λογος, αλλα πατερων ἡμετερων θαυμαζων και επισημων ανδρων. *In cap. Matt.* i. *Hom.* iii. VII. p. 20. *(P.)*

‡ Ουκετι λεγει ὁτι αυτος, αλλ' ὁτι δι' αυτε ὁ Θεος, ἱνα μαλλον τῳ μετριαζειν εφελκυσηται. *In Acta Apostolorum*, Cap. ii. *Hom.* vi. VIII. p. 491. *(P.)*

§ Ου λεγει ὡν ειπεν ὁ Χριστος, αλλ' ὡν ελαλησεν ὁ Θεος, ετι τῳ συσκιαζειν μαλλον αυτες επαγομενος εις πιστιν ηρεμα. *Ibid. Hom.* ix. VIII. p. 511. *(P.)*

‖ To these observations I would add, that, as among the twelve apostles there must have been men of very different tempers and abilities, it is not probable that they should all have agreed in conducting themselves upon the plan of not divulging the doctrine of the divinity of their Master till their hearers were sufficiently persuaded of his Messiahship. Some of them would hardly have been capable of so much refinement, and they would certainly have differed about the *time* when it was proper to divulge so great a secret. Besides, the mother of Jesus, and many other persons of both sexes, must have been acquainted with it. For, that this secret was strictly confined to the *twelve apostles* will hardly be maintained. And yet we have no account either of their instructions to act in this manner, or of any difference of opinion or of conduct with respect to it.

It might have been expected also, that the information that a person whom they first conversed with as a *man*, was either God himself, or the maker of the world under God, should have been received with some degree of doubt and hesitation

suffered numbers to die in ignorance of the most important truth in the gospel, lest, by divulging it too soon, the conversion of others should have been prevented. The case evidently was, that these fathers did not know how to account for the great prevalence of the Unitarian doctrine among the *Gentiles* as well as the *Jews* in the early ages of Christianity, but upon such a hypothesis as this. Let their successors do better if they can.

This observation on the character and instructions of the apostles must make all such accounts of their conduct absolutely incredible with respect to every doctrine of *consequence*, on which they could not but lay proportionable stress. But it may perhaps enable us to account for the ignorance of the Jews, and other early Christians, with respect to matters of little or no consequence, on which the apostles did not lay any stress, and for which reason they might say little or nothing about them, as for instance with respect to the miraculous conception.

In our Saviour's lifetime he certainly passed for the son of Joseph with the Jews in general. The first disciples would naturally adopt the same opinion; and it does not appear that the apostles thought it a matter of consequence enough to set them right with respect to it; for there is no reference whatever to the miraculous conception either in the book of *Acts*, or in any of the *Epistles*. Indeed that doctrine has never been thought to be of any importance *in itself;* Christ being as properly a *man* on one supposition as on the other. It is therefore only of importance with respect to the credit of *Matthew* and *Luke*, as historians, and that not with respect to what they write from their *own knowledge*, but only as to what they collected from others. Whereas if Christ was not a *mere man*, but either truly *God*, or the *maker of the world under God*, it could not but have appeared to be a matter of the greatest consequence in the scheme of Christianity itself; and the apostles would certainly have taken some opportunity of inculcating it with an energy suited to its importance. We may, therefore, easily

by some or other of them; especially as they had been so very hard to be persuaded of the truth of his resurrection, though they had been so fully apprized of it before hand. And yet, in all the history of the apostles, there is the same profound silence concerning this circumstance, and every other depending on the whole scheme, as if no such thing had ever had any existence but in the imaginations of Athanasius, Chrysostom, and those other fathers who maintained it; which I therefore believe to have been the case, and that they invented this hypothesis in order to account for the *early rise* and *general spread* of the Unitarian doctrine, which they could not deny, and of which it may therefore be considered as very good evidence. (*P.*) *Postscript* to *Letters*, 1783.

account for the general prevalence of the opinion of Christ being the son of Joseph, though it was false; but it is absolutely impossible to account for the general prevalence of the doctrine of the mere humanity of Christ, on the supposition of his being either God, or the maker of the world under God, and consequently of his being known to be so by the apostles. I may perhaps take some future opportunity of making some further observations on the subject of the *miraculous conception;* and in the mean time the *Monthly Reviewer* may be indulging his conjectures, and preparing his exclamations; for which our readers will likewise be pretty well prepared.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

An Argument for the late Origin of the Doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, from the Difficulty of tracing the Time in which it was first divulged.

Dear Sir,

I cannot dismiss this subject of the strong prejudices of the Jews in general in favour of their *Messiah* being merely a man, (thus explicitly acknowledged by *Athanasius*, *Chrysostom*, and others, who say, that *on this account* the apostles did not preach the doctrine of the divinity of Christ at first, but only after the people were satisfied with respect to his Messiahship,) without requesting your opinion with respect to the *time* when this great secret of Christ not being merely a man, but the eternal God himself, or the maker of heaven and earth under God, was communicated, first to the apostles themselves, and then by them to the body of Christians.

You cannot say that *John the Baptist* preached any such doctrine; and when the apostles first attached themselves to Jesus, it is evident they only considered him as being such a *Messiah* as the rest of the Jews expected, viz, a man and a king. When *Nathaniel* was introduced to him it was evidently in that light, *John* i. 45: "Philip findeth Nathaniel, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." He had then, we may suppose, no knowledge even of the miraculous conception.

Now, as you say, that Christ "was so much more than man, that his being found in fashion as a man was really

the most extraordinary part of his history and character;"* and at first the apostles, you must allow, were wholly ignorant of this; there must have been a *time* within the compass of the evangelical history when this most extraordinary part of his character was communicated to them. Now what period in the gospel history can you pitch upon, in which you can suppose that this great discovery was made to them? What traces do you find of it?

That Jesus was even the *Messiah*, was divulged with the greatest caution, both to the apostles and to the body of the Jews. For a long time our Lord said nothing explicit on this subject, but left his disciples as well as the Jews at large, to judge of him from what they saw. In this manner only he replied to the messengers that *John the Baptist* sent to him.

If the high-priest expressed his horror by rending his clothes, [*Matt.* xxvi. 65, *Mark* xiv. 63,] on Jesus avowing himself to be the *Messiah*, what would he have done if he had heard or suspected that he had made any higher pretensions? And if he had made them, they must have transpired. When the people in general saw his miraculous works, they only wondered that God should have given so much power to a man. *Matt.* ix. 8: "When the multitude saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, *who* had given such power unto men;" and yet this was on the occasion of his pronouncing the cure of a paralytic person, by saying, [*ver.* 5,] "Thy sins be forgiven thee," which the *Pharisees* thought to be a blasphemous presumption.

At the time that *Herod* heard of him, [*Luke* ix. 7,] it was conjectured by some, [*ver.* 8,] that he was *Elias*, by others that he was a prophet, and by some that he was *John risen from the dead;* but none of them imagined that he was either the most high God himself, or the maker of the world under God. It was not so much as supposed by any person that Jesus performed his mighty works by any proper power of *his own;* so far were they from suspecting that he was the God who had spoken to them by Moses, as you now suppose him to have been.

If he was known to be a God at all before his death, it could only have been revealed to his disciples, perhaps the apostles, or only his chief confidants among them, *Peter*, *James*, and *John*, suppose on the Mount of Transfiguration, though nothing is said concerning it in the history of that

* *Charge*, p. 24. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 23, 24.

transaction. [*Matt.* xvii. 2—5; *Mark* ix. 2—7.] Certainly what they saw in the garden of *Gethsemane* could not have led them to suspect any such thing. But if it had ever been known to *Peter*, can we suppose he could have denied him as he did? Besides, as our Lord told them there were many things which he could not inform them of before his death, and that they should know afterwards; this was a thing so very wonderful and unsuspected, that if any articles of information were kept from them at that time, *this* must certainly have been one.

If you suppose that *Thomas* was acquainted with this most extraordinary part of his Master's character, which led him to cry, "My Lord and my God," when he was convinced of his resurrection,* as he was not one of the *three* who had been intrusted with any secrets, it must have been known to all the twelve, and to *Judas Iscariot* among the rest. And suppose him to have known and to have believed that Jesus was his God and Maker, was it possible for him, or for any man, to have formed a deliberate purpose to betray him? (*Peter*, you may say, was taken by surprise, and was in personal danger.) Or, if he had only heard of the pretension, and had not believed it, would he not have made some advantage of that imposition, and have made the discovery of this, as well as of every thing else that he knew to his prejudice?

If you suppose that the divinity of Christ was unknown to the apostles till the day of *Pentecost;* besides losing the benefit of several of your arguments for this great doctrine, which you now carefully collect from the four evangelists, we have no account of any such discovery having been made at that time, or at any subsequent one. And of other articles of illumination, of much less consequence than this, we have distinct information, and also of the manner in which they impressed them. This is particularly the case with respect to the extension of the blessings of the gospel to uncircumcised *Gentiles.* But what was this article, to the knowledge of their master being the most high God?

If the doctrine of the divinity of Christ had been actually preached by the apostles, and the Jewish converts in general had adopted it, it could not but have been well known to the unbelieving Jews; and would they, who were at that time, and have been ever since, so exceedingly zealous with respect to the doctrine of the divine unity,

* *John* xx. 28. See Vol. XIII. pp. 378, 379.

not have taken the alarm, and have urged this objection to Christianity, as teaching the belief of more gods than one, in the apostolic age? And yet no trace of any thing of this nature can be perceived in the whole history of the book of *Acts*, or any where else in the *New Testament*. As soon as ever the Jews had any pretence for it, we find them sufficiently quick and vehement in urging this their great objection to Christianity. To answer the charge of holding *two* or *three Gods*, is a very considerable article in the writings of several of the ancient Christian fathers. Why, then, do we find nothing of this kind in the age of the apostles? The only answer is, that there was no occasion for it, the doctrine of the divinity of Christ not having then been started.*

Consider, Sir, the charge that was advanced against *Peter* and *John* at the first promulgation of the gospel. You will find it amounts to nothing but their being disturbers of the people, by preaching in the name of Jesus. What was the accusation against Stephen (*Acts* vi. 13) but his speaking "blasphemous words" *against the Temple and the Law?* Accompany the apostle *Paul* in all his travels, and attend to his discourses with the Jews in their synagogues, and their perpetual and inveterate persecution of him, you will find no trace of their so much as suspecting that he preached a *new divinity*, as the godhead of Christ must have appeared, and always has appeared to them.

In the year 58, Paul tells the elders of the church of Ephesus, (*Acts* xx. 27,) that *he had not failed to declare unto them the whole counsel of God*. We may be confident, therefore, that, if he had any such doctrine to divulge, he must have taught it in the three years that he spent in that city from 54 to 57; and, as the unbelieving *Jews* were well apprized of all his motions, having laid wait for him on this very journey to *Jerusalem*, they must have been informed of his having taught this doctrine, and would certainly have carried the news of it to Jerusalem, where many of them attended, as well as he, at the ensuing feast of *Pentecost*. But if we attend *Paul* thither, where we have a very particular account of all the proceedings against him for the space of two years, we shall find no trace of any thing of

* *Athanasius* strongly expresses this objection, as made by both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, to the incarnation of the Son of God, though as a thing that was gloried in by Christians. "The Jews," says he, "reproach us for it; the Gentiles laugh at it; but we adore it." Ἡν Ἰουδαῖοι μεν διαβάλλουσιν, Ἕλληνες δε χλευάζουσιν, ἡμεις δε προσκυνουμεν. "De Incarnatione Verbi," *Athanasii Opera*, I. p. 53. (*P.*)

the kind. All their complaints against him fell far short of this.

What was the occasion of the first clamour against him? Was it not, (*Acts* xxi. 28,) that he taught "all men every where against the people, and against the Law, and against *the Temple*," and that he had "brought Greeks" into it? Is it not plain that they had no more serious charge against him? Read his speech to the people, his defence before *Felix*, and again before *Agrippa;* you will find no trace of his having taught any doctrine so offensive to the Jews as that of the divinity of Christ must have been. Considering the known prejudices and the inveteracy of the Jews, no reasonable man need desire any clearer proof than this, that neither *Paul* nor any of the apostles had ever taught the doctrine of the divinity of Christ at that time; and this was so near the time of the wars of the Jews, and the dispersion of that people, that there was no opportunity of preaching it with effect afterwards.

Consider also the conduct of the *Jewish Christians*, who had strong prejudices against *Paul*, as we find in this part of his history; and, according to the testimony of all historians, they retained those prejudices as long as they had any name; and after the destruction of *Jerusalem*, which was not long after the close of the history of the *Acts*, no trace can be found of their believing any such doctrine as the divinity of Christ. Now, though their enmity to *Paul* continued, and they never considered his writings as canonical Scripture, yet, to the very last, their objections to him amounted to nothing more than his being no friend to the law of Moses.

The resemblance between the character of the *Ebionites*, as given by the early Christian fathers, and that of the Jewish Christians at the time of *Paul's* last journey to Jerusalem, is very striking. After he had given an account of his conduct to the more intelligent of them, they were satisfied with it; but they thought there would be great difficulty in satisfying others. "Thou seest, brother," say they to him, (*Acts* xxi. 20—24,) "how many thousands of Jews there are *who* believe, and they are all zealous of the law. And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews *who* are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses; saying, that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? The multitudes must needs come together, for they will hear that thou art come. Do, therefore, this that we say to

thee. We have four men *who* have a vow on them. Them take and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads, and all may know that those things whereof they were informed concerning thee are nothing, but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law." So great a resemblance in some things, viz. their attachment to the law, and their prejudices against *Paul*, cannot but lead us to imagine that they were the same in other respects also, both being equally zealous observers of the law, and equally strangers to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. And in that age all the Jews were equally zealous for the great doctrine of the *unity of God*, and their *peculiar customs*. Can it be supposed, then, that they would so obstinately retain the one, and so readily abandon the other?

These considerations (and much more might be added to enforce them) certainly affect the credibility of Christ having any nature superior to that of man; and, when they are sufficiently attended to, (as I suspect they never have been,) must shake the *Arian* hypothesis; but they must be particularly embarrassing to those who, like you, maintain the perfect equality of the *Son* to the *Father*.

Considerations of this kind, if they occur to him, no person, who thinks at all, can absolutely neglect, so as to satisfy himself with having no hypothesis on the subject. You certainly find the apostles as well as the rest of the Jews without any knowledge of the divinity of Christ, with whom they lived and conversed as a man; and if they ever became acquainted with it, there must have been a *time* when it was either discovered by them, or made known to them; and the effects of the acquisition, or the communication of extraordinary knowledge, are in general proportionably conspicuous.

Had we had no written history of our Saviour's life, or of the preaching of the apostles, or only some very concise one; still so very extraordinary an article as this would hardly have been unknown, or have passed unrecorded; much less when the history is so full and circumstantial as it is.

Had there been any pretence for imagining that the Jews in our Saviour's time had any knowledge of the doctrine of the Trinity, and that they expected the second person in it in the character of their *Messiah*, the question I propose to you would have been needless. But nothing can

be more evident than that, whatever you may fancy with respect to more ancient times, every notion of the Trinity was obliterated from the minds of the Jews in our Saviour's time. It is, therefore, not only a curious but a serious and important question, *When was it introduced*, and *by what steps?* I have answered it on my hypothesis of its being an *innovation* and a *corruption* of the Christian doctrine; do you the same on your idea of its being an essential part of it.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

Of the Personification of the Logos.

DEAR SIR,

HAVING considered all that you have advanced concerning the antiquity of the Unitarian doctrine, I proceed to attend to what you observe concerning the *personification of the Logos* by the platonizing Christians: for, that many of them did platonize, you are far from denying. "If," you say, "he hath succeeded no better in the proof of his third assertion, concerning the Platonic Christians of the second age, the inventors, as he would have it, of our Lord's divinity; that the divinity which they set up was only of that secondary sort, which was admitted by the Arians, including neither eternity nor any proper necessity of existence; having the meer name of divinity, without any thing of the real form: if the proof of this third assertion should be found to be equally infirm with that of the other two, his notion of the gradual progress of opinions from the meer Unitarian doctrine to the Arian, and from the Arian doctrine to the Athanasian faith, must be deemed a meer dream or fiction in every part."*

In the first place I must set you right with respect to my own idea, which you have totally misconceived, though you have undertaken to refute it; and this strange mistake of yours runs through the whole of your work. Those platonizing Christians who personified the *Logos* were not *Arians:* for their *Logos* was an attribute of the Father, and not any thing that was created of nothing, as the Arians held Christ to have been. It is well known, as *Beausobre*

† *Charge*, p. 50. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 50, 51.

observes, that they were not Arians, but the orthodox, that platonized. *Constantine*, as I have observed,* "in his oration to the fathers of the Council of Nice, speaks in commendation of Plato, as having taught the doctrine of 'a second God, derived from the Supreme God, and subservient to his will.'"

Among the proofs of the origin of the Son, according to the early orthodox writers, I first quoted a passage in *Athenagoras*, which you translate somewhat differently from me; but not so as to affect my conclusion from it. For, he evidently asserts that the *Logos* was eternal in God, only because God was always λογικος, *rational*, which entirely excludes proper personification.† Can reason, as it exists in man, be called a person, merely because man is a *rational* being?

Besides, this is the only one of all my authorities that you have thought proper to examine; whereas there are others, which you have overlooked, so plain and determinate, that it is impossible for you to interpret them otherwise than I have done; as they evidently imply that it depended upon the Father's will that the *Logos* should have a proper personification, and become a Son, with respect to him. The passages which I have quoted from *Tertullian* and *Lactantius*,‡ whose orthodoxy you cannot question, I call upon you particularly to consider.

There is a passage in Tertullian which shews how ready the platonizing Christians were to revert to the idea of an *attribute* of God in their use of the word *Logos*. "We have said that God made the universe by his *word*, *reason*, and *power*; and it appears that among your philosophers also, the *Logos*, that is, *speech* and *reason*, was the maker of the universe. For this, *Zeno* supposed to be the maker and disposer of all things, that the same is called *fate*, and *god*, and the *mind of Jupiter*, and the *necessity of all things*."§ The Platonic Trinity, at least the second person in it, probably had its origin in personification; and in this the Christians were too ready to follow them, by converting the *Logos* of St. *John* into a proper person.

* Vol. V. p. 506. † See *Athenagoras*, p. 82. (*P.*)

‡ Vol. V. pp. 32—34.

§ "Jam ediximus Deum universitatem hanc mundi verbo, et ratione, et virtute molitum. Apud vestros quoque sapientes, λογον, id est sermonem, atque rationem, constat artificem videri universitatis. Hunc enim Zeno determinat factitatorem, qui cuncta in dispositione formaverit; eundem et fatum vocari, et deum, et animum Jovis, et necessitatem omnium rerum." *Apologeticus*, Sect. xxi. p. 19. (*P.*) See Reeves's *Apologies*, 1709, I. p. 256, *Note* h.

You acknowledge that these writers *platonized*, and this you say was common to *Athenagoras* and them all. "If any thing," you say, "be justly reprehensible in the notions of the Platonic Christians, it is this conceit, which seems to be common to Athenagoras, with them all, and is a key to the meaning of many obscure passages in their writings, that the *external display of the powers* of the Son in the business of the creation, is the thing intended in the scripture language under the figure of his *generation;* a conceit which seems to have no certain foundation in holy writ, and no authority in the opinions and the doctrines of the preceding age; and it seems to have betrayed some of those who were the most wedded to it into the use of a very improper language; as if a new relation had taken place between the first and the second person, when the creative powers were first exerted."*

You add, after apologizing for the conduct of the platonizing fathers, "the conversion of an attribute into a person, whatever Dr. Priestley may imagine, is a notion to which they were entire strangers."† I answer that it is not possible, either by the use of plain words or figures, to express this notion, to which you say they were entire strangers, more clearly than they do; for, according to the most definite language a man can use, the *Logos*, as existing in the Father, prior to the creation, was, according to them, the same thing in him that *reason* is in *man*, which is certainly no proper *person* distinguishable from the man himself. Will you say that the *man* is one person or thing, and his *reason* another, not comprehended in the *man?* In like manner it is impossible not to infer from the uniform language of these writers, that, according to their ideas, there was nothing in or belonging to the *Son*, originally, but what was necessarily contained in what they express by the term *Father*. I will add, that if this was not the orthodoxy of the age, there was no orthodoxy in it.

That the *Logos* of the Father, the same that constituted the second person in the Trinity, exactly corresponded to the *Logos*, or reason, or word of man, was the idea of *Athanasius* himself. Having spoken of the Father, as called the *only God*, because he only is unbegotten, αγεννητος, and the *fountain of Deity*, πηγη Θεοτητος, and of the Son as only *God of God*, Θεος εκ Θεου, he says, in answer to the question how this Logos can become a person in God when

* *Charge*, p. 56. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 57, 58. † *Ibid.* p. 58.

it does not so in man, "The word conceived in the mind of man does not become *man of man*, since it does not live or subsist, but is only the motion of a living and subsisting heart. When it is pronounced it has no continuance, and being often uttered, does not remain. Whereas the Psalmist says, *the Word of the Lord remaineth for ever*, and the evangelist agrees with him, &c."*

"On this subject," you say, "it is but justice to Dr. Priestley to acknowledge, what indeed he ought to have acknowledged for himself, that in this misinterpretation of the Platonic fathers, he is not original; that he hath upon his side the respectable authority of two very eminent divines of the Roman church, Petavius and Huetius."† Of this, I assure you, Sir, I was quite ignorant; but I see no reason to be ashamed of such company, or of any company, in the cause of truth.

That any mere *external display of powers*, as you say, should ever be termed *generation*,‡ is so improbable, from its manifest want of analogy to any thing that ever was called *generation* before or since, that such an abuse of words is not to be supposed of these writers, or of any person, without very positive proof; and in this case you advance nothing but a mere conjecture, destitute of any thing that can give it a colour of probability.

If the *Logos* had had an actual *personal existence* with all its proper and separate powers, from all eternity, how could he be said to be *generated*, when he only exerted those powers in a particular way? For since, according to your hypothesis, he was always an intelligent person from the beginning, he must have exerted his intellectual faculties in some way or other from all eternity, as much as the Father himself; and was the exertion of the faculties of the Father in the creation of the world ever called *a generation of the Father*, by those who supposed creation to be a work of his, performed in time, after the lapse of an eternity in which nothing had been created? And yet, according to you, this language must have been equally proper with respect to the Father as with respect to the Son, both having been intelligent persons from all eternity.

* Ου γαρ ὁ λογος τη ανθρωπη ανθρωπος εϛι προς ανθρωπον· επει μητε ζων εϛι, μητε ὑφεϛωσης, αλλα ζωσης καρδιας και ὑφεϛωσης κινημα μονον και λεγεται παρα χρημα, και ουκ εϛι· και πολλακις καλημενος, ουδε ποτε διαμενει· το δε τη Θεη λογον ανωθεν, ὁ ψαλμωδος κεκραγει λεγων, Εις τον αιωνα ὁ λογος ϛη διαμενει εν τω ουρανω· και συμφωνος αυτω ὁ Θεον ειναι τον λογον ὁμολογων Ευαγγελιϛης, &c. "De Æterna Substantia Filii, &c. contra Sabellii Gregales," *Opera*, I. p. 651. *(P.)*

† *Charge*, p. 58. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 59. ‡ *Ibid.* pp. 57, 58.

You say, "After all that Dr. Priestley hath written about the resemblance between the ecclesiastical and the Platonic Trinity, he hath yet, it seems, to learn, that a *created Logos*, a Logos which had ever not existed, was no less an absurdity in the academy, than it is an impiety in the church. The converts from Platonism must have renounced their philosophy, before they could be the authors of this absurd, this monstrous opinion. As the notion that this doctrine took its rise with them betrays a total ignorance of the genuine principles of their school, it is easy to foresee that the arguments brought in support of it can only be founded in gross misconstruction of their language."*

To this I can only say, that you discover a total ignorance of what I have asserted, and I do not know how to express myself more intellibly than I have done. I have no where said or supposed that either the *Platonists*, or the platonizing Christians, held that the *Logos* was created, or that it had ever not existed; but only that, whereas it was originally nothing more than a *property* of the Divine Mind, it assumed a separate personal character, in time. The *Logos* of the *Platonists* had, in their opinion, always had a personal existence, because *Plato* supposed creation to have been eternal; but this was not the opinion of the platonizing Christians, who held that the world was not eternal; and therefore, retaining as much of Platonism as was consistent with that doctrine, they held that there was a time when the Father was *alone*, and without a son; his *Logos*, or reason, being in all that time the same thing in him that reason now is in man; and of this I have produced abundant evidence.

I cannot close this letter on the *personification of the Logos* without making some observations relating to the first account we have of it.

That Christ had a proper permanent pre-existence as the *Logos of the Father*, first distinctly appears in the writings of *Justin Martyr;* and from his labouring the point so much as he does, and especially from his providing a retreat in case he should not be able to prove it, it is most probable that he was the first who started it. However, he also mentions a different opinion on the subject, which probably preceded his own, and paved the way for it; and this was not very remote from the Unitarian doctrine.

It was, that the emission of the *Logos*, as a person, was an occasional thing, and intended to answer particular pur-

* *Charge*, p. 52. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 52, 53.

poses only; after which it was absorbed into the Divine essence again. On this scheme, the *Logos* might have been a real person first at the creation of the world, and again when it was employed in the Divine intercourse with the patriarchs and the children of Israel, in the intervals of which it might have been deprived of its personality; and, lastly, have recovered it at the birth of Christ, and have retained it ever after. Whereas, the opinion of *Justin* was, that, after the first emission of the *Logos* at the creation of the world, it was never again absorbed into the Divine essence.

"There are," says he, (to abridge what he says on this subject,) "I know, who are of opinion, that the power, δυναμιν, which proceeded from the Father of all, and appeared to Moses, or to Abraham, or to Jacob, and which, in different circumstances, was called an *angel*, a *glory*, or a *man*, remained a power inseparable from the Father,* just as a beam of light is inseparable from the sun,† which is in the heavens, and which, when it sets, it carries along with it. Thus the Father, whenever he pleases, they say, makes this power to come out of him, προπηδαν; and whenever he wills, he calls it back into himself again; and in the same manner they say he makes angels. But that angels are permanent beings, I have already shewn; and that this power, which prophets call *God*, and an *angel*, is not like a beam of light, but remains numerically distinct from its source, I have shewn at large; observing that this power, δυναμιν, is produced by the power and will of the Father, but not so as that the Father loses any thing by its emission, but as one fire is lighted by another.—It is called *Lord* in the history of the destruction of Sodom, and rained fire from that Lord who was in heaven, and who was the Lord of that Lord who was on earth, as his Father and God; being the cause of his being, of his being powerful, and of his being Lord and God."‡

We see in this passage in how plausible a manner, and how little likely to alarm men of plain understandings, was the doctrine of the divinity of Christ as it was first proposed. At first it was nothing more than the *divine power*, occasionally personified, (a small step indeed, if any, from pure

* Ατμητον δε και αχωριστον τθ Πατρος ταυτην την δυναμιν ὑπαρχειν. *Dialogi pars secunda*, ed. Thirlby, p. 412. *(P.)*

† A beam of light was then imagined to be something connected with the sun, and not matter emitted from him, and not returning to him. *(P.)*

‡ Ὁς και τθ επι γης Κυριθ Κυριος εστιν, ὡς Πατηρ και Θεος αιτιος τε αυτφ τθ ειναι και δυνατφ και Κυριφ και Θεφ. *Dialogi pars secunda*, ed. Thirlby, p. 113. *(P.)*

Unitarianism,) and afterwards acquiring permanent personality;* but still dependent upon the will of God, from whence it proceeded, and entirely subservient to him; which was very different from what is now conceived concerning the second person in the Trinity.

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

Considerations relating to the Doctrine of the Trinity.

DEAR SIR,

I CANNOT help, in this place, making a few remarks on some of your observations with respect to the doctrine of the *Trinity*, your ideas of which appear to be those which are commonly termed *Athanasian;* implying a perfect equality in all the three persons. Indeed, as a strenuous advocate for the Church of England, they can be no other.

I. "The advantage," you say, "to be expected from these deep researches, is not any insight into the manner in which the three divine persons are united; a knowledge which is indeed too high for a man, perhaps for angels; which in our present condition at least is not to be attained, and ought not to be sought; but that just apprehension of the Christian doctrine which will shew that it is not one of those things that 'no miracles can prove,'† will be the certain fruit of the studies recommended. They will lead us to see the scripture doctrine in its true light; that it is an imperfect discovery, not a contradiction."‡

* I have given a good deal of attention to this subject, and from a careful perusal of a considerable part of *Justin Martyr's* writings, I think it very probable that he was either the first, or one of the first, who advanced the doctrine of the permanent personality of the *Logos*. I think he writes as if this was the case; but I wish that some other person would give his works a more careful perusal with that particular view. He was probably the oldest of the authorities quoted by the anonymous writer referred to by *Eusebius*, as the *Clemens* mentioned along with him, was probably not *Clemens Romanus* but *Clemens Alexandrinus*, who was later than *Justin Martyr*. Had there been any pretence for quoting *Hegesippus* as a maintainer of the divinity of Christ, he would certainly have been mentioned in preference to *Justin Martyr*, or any others in the list; not only because he was an earlier writer, but chiefly because he was one of the Jewish Christians, who are well known not to have favoured that opinion.

As to the *hymns* used by Christians, and said to have been *from the beginning* (απαρχης) by those who were friends to the supposed doctrine of them, no inference can safely be drawn from them; because *divinity* may be ascribed to persons in very different senses, and some of them very innocent ones; and as to their *antiquity*, it is very possible, for any thing that appears to the contrary, that they might have been those very hymns which were rejected by *Paulus Samosatensis* on account of their *novelty*. *(P.)* *Postscript* to *Letters*, 1783.

† See Vol. V. p. 492.

‡ *Charge*, p. 69. *(P.)* *Tracts*, pp. 69, 70.

A *contradiction*, you acknowledge, is, that "a part is equal to the whole, or that the same thing, in the same respect, is at the same time one and many." This you admit that nothing can prove. "No testimony," you say, "that a contradiction *is*, should be allowed to overpower the intuitive conviction that it *cannot be*. An inquiry, therefore, into the reasonableness of our faith, as well as just views of its history, is of great importance." *

Now I ask, Wherein does the *Athanasian* doctrine of the Trinity differ from a contradiction, as you have defined it? It asserts, in effect, that nothing is wanting to either the *Father*, the *Son*, or the *Spirit*, to constitute each of them truly and properly God; each being equal in eternity and all divine perfections; and yet that these three are not *three Gods*, but only *one God*. They are, therefore, both *one* and *many* in the same respect, viz. in each being *perfect God*. This is certainly as much a contradiction as to say that *Peter*, *James* and *John*, having each of them every thing that is requisite to constitute a complete man, are yet, all together, not *three men*, but only *one man*. For the ideas annexed to the words *God* or *man* cannot make any difference in the nature of the two propositions. After the Council of *Nice*, there are instances of the doctrine of the Trinity being explained in this very manner. The fathers of that age being particularly intent on preserving the full *equality* of the three persons, they entirely lost sight of their proper *unity*. And, explain this doctrine as you will, one of these things must ever be sacrificed to the other.

II. Notwithstanding what I have quoted from you above, you seem to countenance some sort of *explanation* of the doctrine of the Trinity. "The sense" (viz. of *Athenagoras*), you say, "is, that the personal subsistence of a divine Logos is implied in the very idea of a God. And the argument rests on a principle which was common to all the Platonic fathers, and seems to be founded in Scripture, that the existence of the Son flows necessarily from the Divine Intellect exerted on itself; from the Father's contemplation of his own perfections. But as the Father ever was, his perfections have ever been, and his intellect has been ever active. But perfections which have ever been, the ever-active intellect must ever have contemplated; and the contemplation which hath ever been, must ever have been

* *Tracts*, p. 68.

accompanied with its just effect, the personal existence of the Son."*

I wish you had shewn what it is in the Scriptures, or indeed in the fathers, that gives any countenance to this curious piece of reasoning; and in your reply to me I hope you will not fail to point it out. In the mean time, as we cannot pretend to draw any conclusions from the necessary operations of *one mind*, but from their supposed analogy to those of *other minds*, that is, *our own*, you will find yourself embarrassed with a difficulty similar to that of *Tertullian*, *Lactantius* and *Athanasius;* and must explain to us how it comes to pass, that, if the contemplation of the divine perfections of the Father necessarily produced a distinct person in him, fully equal to himself, a *man's* contemplation of such perfections, or powers, as he is possessed of, should not produce another intelligent person fully equal to himself?

You will, perhaps, say, (though you can have nothing to authorize it,) that the impossibility of producing this in man, is the imperfection of his faculties, or his limited power of contemplating them. But to cut off that subterfuge, I will ask, why the contemplation of the Son's perfections, which you suppose to be fully equal to those of the Father, and whose energy of contemplation you must likewise suppose equal to that of the Father, does not produce another intelligent being equal to himself; and why are not *persons in the Godhead*, in this manner, multiplied *ad infinitum?* If, for any incomprehensible reason, this mysterious *power of generation* be peculiar to the Father, why does it not still operate? Is he not an unchangeable being, the same now that he was from the beginning, his perfections the same, and his power of contemplating them the same? Why, then, are not more sons produced? Is he become αγονος, incapable of this generation, as the orthodox fathers used to ask? Or does it depend upon his *will* and *pleasure*, whether he will exert this power of generation? If so, is not the Son as much a *creature*, depending upon the will of the Creator, as any thing else produced by him, though in another manner; and this whether he be of the same substance, ὁμοουσιος, with him, or not?

I should also like to know in what manner the *third person* in the Trinity was produced. Was it by the joint exertion of the two first, in the contemplation of their respective perfections? If so, why does not the same operation in them produce a *fourth?* &c. &c. &c.

* *Charge*, p. 55. *(P.) Tracts*, pp. 55, 56.

Admitting, however, this strange account of the generation of the Trinity, (equal in absurdity to any thing in the Jewish *cabala,)* viz. that the personal existence of the Son necessarily flows from the intellect of the Father exerted on itself,* it certainly implies a virtual *priority* or *superiority* in the Father with respect to the Son ; and no being can be properly *God* who has any *superior*. In short, your scheme effectually overturns the doctrine of the proper *equality* as well as that of the *unity* of the three persons in the Trinity.

Indeed, Sir, had you lived in some former ticklish times, when words were more narrowly watched than they are now, I think you would have run some risk of being accused of heresy, for thus boldly making the second person in the Trinity to be nothing more than *an effect*, though the necessary effect of the Father's contemplation of his own perfections. Far from this was Dr. Waterland, and all the strict *Athanasians* of the last age. They maintained that the Trinity consisted of three persons, all *truly independent* of each other. It is, indeed, very amusing to observe how many totally discordant opinions, schemes as distant from each other as light and darkness, all pass for *orthodoxy* in this heedless age ; in which we have no councils, synods, or convocations, to watch over the faith. Error itself is hardly more various than modern truth.

III. You cannot but acknowledge that the proper object of prayer is God the Father, whom you call the first person in the Trinity. Indeed, you cannot find in the Scriptures any *precept* that will authorize us to address ourselves to any other person, nor any proper *example* of it. Every thing that you can allege to this purpose, as *Stephen's* short ejaculatory address to Christ, whom he had just before seen in vision, &c., is very inconsiderable. Our Saviour himself always prayed to his Father, and with as much humility and resignation as the most dependent being in the universe could possibly do ; always addressing him as his *father*, or the *author of his being ;* and he directs his disciples to pray to the same great Being, *whom only*, he says, *we ought to serve.*

Had he intended to guard against all mistake on this subject, by speaking of God as the author of his being, *in the same sense* in which he is the author of being to all men, he could not have done it more expressly than he has, by calling him his Father and our Father, his God and our God.

* See *supra*, p. 93.

the serious simplicity of my heart, when young, would, I doubt not, have been done by all Christians from the beginning, if their minds had then been impressed, as mine was, with the firm persuasion that all the three persons were fully equal in power, wisdom, goodness, omnipresence, and all divine attributes. This argument I recommend to your serious consideration, as it is with me a sufficient proof that, originally, Christ was not considered as a proper object of worship by Christians, and consequently neither as God, nor as the maker or governor of the world under God.

IV. I wish you would reflect a little on the subject, and then inform us what there is in the doctrine of the Trinity, *in itself considered*, that can recommend it as a part of a system of religious truth. All that can be said for it is, that the doctrine, however improbable in itself, is necessary to explain some particular texts of Scripture; and that, if it had not been for those particular texts, we should have found no want of it; for there is neither any fact in *nature*, nor any one purpose of *morals*, (which are the object and end of all religion,) that requires it.

Is not one self-existent, almighty, infinitely wise, and perfectly good Being fully equal to the production of all things, and also to the support and government of the worlds which he has made? A second person in the godhead cannot be really wanted for this purpose, as far as we can conceive.

Whatever may be meant by the *redemption of the world*, is not the Being who made it equal to that also? If his creatures offend him, and by repentance and reformation become the proper objects of his forgiveness, is it not more natural to suppose that he has *within himself* a power of forgiving them, and of restoring them to his favour, without the strange expedient of another person, fully equal to himself, condescending to animate a human body, and dying for us? We never think of any similar expedient in order to forgive, with the greatest propriety and effect, offences committed by our children against ourselves.

Whatever you suppose to be the use of a *third person* in the Trinity, is not the influence of the first person sufficient for that also? The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles was to enable them to work miracles; but when our Saviour was on earth, *the Father within him*, and acting by him, did the same thing.

You also cannot deny that, exclusive of some particular texts, the general tenor of scripture does not suppose such a Trinity as you contend for. Is it not the general tenor of the *Old* and *New Testament*, that the Supreme God himself, and not any other person acting under him, was the proper maker of the world; and that he himself, and not any other being, supports and governs it? Is not the same great being the God and Father of us all, and even the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, represented as forgiving the sins of his penitent offspring *freely*, and exhorting us to forgive as we ourselves hope to be forgiven? And are we to require any ransom, recompence, or atonement, of a penitent brother?

You will say, that there are obscure intimations of the doctrine of the Trinity in the *Old Testament*, as in God's saying, *Let us make man*, and *Let us go down and confound their languages*, &c. But even that literal interpretation of these expressions, which you contend for, does not really favour your hypothesis; for then there must have been at least *two persons* concerned in making the world, and also two or more persons must have had that intercourse with mankind, which you say was the province of the second person in the Trinity only.

The plural number forming the regal style in the *East* furnishes a very easy explanation of all such texts as these; especially considering that the word denoting *God* in Hebrew is in the plural number.

Why then, dear Sir, should you be so desirous of retaining such a doctrine as this of the Trinity, which you must acknowledge has an uncouth appearance, has always confounded the best reason of mankind, and drives us to the undesirable doctrine of *inexplicable mysteries*, to the great offence of *Jews*, *Mahometans*, and unbelievers in general, without some urgent necessity? Of two difficulties we are always authorized to choose the least; and why should we risk the whole of Christianity for the sake of so unnecessary and undesirable a part?

Try, then, whether you cannot hit upon some method or other of reconciling a few particular texts, not only with *common sense*, but also with the general and the obvious tenor of the *Scriptures themselves*. In this you will, no doubt, find some difficulty at first, from the effect of early impressions and association of ideas; but an attention to the true idiom of the scripture language, with such helps as you may want, but will easily find, for the purpose, will

At the same time he calls his disciples his *brethren*. *John* xx. 17: "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." Can you, Sir, read this, and say that we Unitarians wrest the Scriptures, and are not guided by the plain sense of them?

Accordingly, the practice of praying to the Father only, was long universal in the Christian church; the short addresses to Christ, as those in the *Litany*, "Lord have mercy on us, Christ have mercy on us," being comparately of late date. In the *Clementine* Liturgy, the oldest that is extant, contained in the *Apostolical Constitutions*, which were probably composed about the fourth century,* there is no trace of any such thing. *Origen*, in a large treatise on the subject of prayer, urges very forcibly the propriety of praying to the Father only, and not to Christ; and as he gives no hints that the public forms of prayer had any thing reprehensible in them in that respect, we are naturally led to conclude that, in his time, such petitions to Christ were unknown in the public assemblies of Christians; and such hold have early established customs on the minds of men, that, excepting the *Moravians* only, whose prayers are always addressed to Christ,† the general practice of Trinitarians themselves is to pray to the Father only.

Now please, Sir, to consider on what *principle* could this early and universal practice have been founded. What is there in your doctrine of a Trinity, consisting of three equal persons, to entitle the *Father* to that distinction more than the *Son* or the *Spirit*? I doubt not but that, considering the thing *ab initio*, you yourself would have thought that, since of these three persons it is the *second* that was the *maker of the world* and who is the *immediate governor of it*, he is that person of the three with whom *we have most to do*; and therefore he is that person to whom our prayers ought to be addressed. This, I should think, would have been a natural conclusion, even if Christ had not been thought to be equal to the Father, but only the maker and the governor of the world under him; supposing him to have had power originally given him equal to the making and governing of it, as I have shewn at large in my *Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit*.‡ For we should naturally look up to that Being on whom we immediately depend, knowing that it must be his proper province to attend to us.

* See *Lardner*, II. p. 407; IV. p. 350.
† See Vol. X. p. 505. ‡ See Vol. III. pp. 420, 421.

If there should have been any reason in the nature of things, though undiscoverable and incomprehensible by us, why the world should have been made and supported by some being of communicated power and delegated authority, rather than by the self-existent and Supreme Being himself, (and if the fact be so, there must have been some good reason for it,) that unknown reason, whatever it be, naturally presents this derived being to us as the proper object of our prayers. And I must observe once more, that a derived pre-existent being, supposed to animate the body of Jesus, and who is not also the maker of the world, is a creature of imagination only, whose existence is not to be inferred, with the least colourable pretext, from the Scriptures. If the sacred writers do represent Christ as having pre-existed at all, they certainly suppose him to be the maker of all things. Let those, therefore, who pretend to maintain the *Arian* hypothesis either assert it in its original and proper extent, or else abandon it altogether.

But supposing this second person in the Trinity to be our independent maker, governor, and final judge, the propriety of praying to him, and to him exclusively, is so obvious, that no consideration whatever could have prevented the practice, if such had been the real belief of the Christian world from the beginning. That Christians did not do so at first, but prayed habitually to the Father only, is therefore with me almost a demonstration that they did not consider Christ in that light; but that, whatever they might think of him, they did not regard him as being a proper *object of worship*, and consequently not as possessed of the attributes that are proper to constitute him one, and therefore not as truly *God*. The persuasion that he was truly God, and that God on whom we immediately depend, would unavoidably have drawn after it the habitual practice of praying to him, as it has at length effected with respect to the Moravians; and in spite of constant usage, and against all scripture precept and example, the practice has more or less prevailed with all Trinitarians. *Petrarch*, we find by his *Letters*, generally prayed to Christ; that pious treatise of *Thomas-à-Kempis*, on the *Imitation of Christ*, consists of nothing besides addresses to him, and they compose the greater part of the *Litany* in the Church of England.

When I was myself a *Trinitarian*, I remember praying conscientiously to all the three persons without distinction, only beginning with the Father; and what I myself did in

satisfy you, that the doctrine of the Trinity furnishes no proper clue to the right understanding of those texts, but will only serve to mislead you.

In the mean time, this doctrine of the Trinity wears so disagreeable an aspect, that I think every reasonable man must say with the excellent archbishop Tillotson, with respect to the *Athanasian* Creed, "I wish we were well rid of it."* This is not setting up reason against the Scriptures, but reconciling reason with the Scriptures, and the Scriptures with themselves. On your scheme they are irreconcilably at variance.

V. In a mode of writing altogether improper in a serious discourse, you ridicule the *Socinian* interpretations of scripture as unnatural, and contrary to their obvious meaning; and after a long enumeration of things, which you say *may be clear to my apprehension*, but which you insinuate can never be clear to the apprehension of any man, you add, "But to others, who have not sagacity to discern that the true meaning of an inspired writer must be the reverse of the natural and obvious sense of the expressions which he employs, the force of the conclusion, that the primitive Christians could not believe our Lord to be more than a meer man, because the apostles had told them that he was the creator of the universe, will be little understood."†

In answer to this, which I suppose you intended for *irony*, and which I shall not endeavour to retort, I shall content myself with taking the very text which you produce as the most difficult for an Unitarian to reconcile to his opinion, and shew you expressions in it which it is absolutely impossible for you to accommodate to your own principles, without, to adopt your own language, "making the true meaning of the writer the very reverse of the natural and obvious sense of the expressions which he employs."

The passage, which is of your own selection, is *Col.* i. 15—17, in which Paul affirms that Christ "is the image of the invisible God," and "the first-born of every creature;" and yet you make him not the *image* of God, but *God him-*

* Letter to *Burnet*, Oct. 23, 1694, on his *Exposition of the Articles;* Life of *Burnet* in O. T. II. p. 719; Birch's *Life of Tillotson*, Ed. 2, 1753, p. 315.

In some very severe *Remarks*, occasioned by this *Life*, it is asked, with reference to *Tillotson's* dissatisfaction with *Athanasius's* Creed, while he enjoyed the honours and emoluments of the *Church* which imposed it; "But how came he, then, to subscribe and use it so often as he did? If he did not approve of the terms, why did he stretch his conscience so frequently, for obtaining his many preferments?" *Remarks on the Life of Archbishop Tillotson*, Ed. 2, 1754, p. 54.

† *Charge*, p. 14. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 12—14.

self, and so far from being a *creature*, that he is the *creator of all things*. Produce any *Socinian* interpretation of a text of scripture more directly contrary to its obvious meaning, if you can. Whatever difficulty an Unitarian may find in accommodating the latter part of the passage to his sentiments, you must find much more to accommodate the former part to the *Athanasian* doctrine. And I will venture to say, that for one text in which you can pretend to find any thing harsh or difficult to me, I will engage to produce ten that must create more difficulty to you.

How strangely must you torture the plainest language, and in which there is not a shadow of *figure*, to interpret to your purpose 1 *Tim.* ii. 5: "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;" 1 *Cor.* viii. 6: "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him;" or that expression of our Saviour himself, (*John* xvii. 3,) "That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent"! Never upbraid us Unitarians with torturing the Scriptures, while you have these and a hundred other plain texts to strain at, and bend to your *Athanasian* hypothesis; besides many *general arguments*, from reason and the Scriptures, of more real force than any particular texts, to answer.

VI. There is something inexplicable, and not to be accounted for, in the conduct of several of the evangelists, indeed of all of them, upon the supposition of their having entertained the same sentiments concerning Christ that you do. Each of the gospels was certainly intended to be a sufficient instruction in the fundamental principles of the doctrine of Christianity. But there is nothing that can be called an account of the divine or even the super-angelic nature of Christ in the gospels of *Matthew*, *Mark*, or *Luke*; and allowing that there may be some colour for it in the introduction of the gospel of *John*, it is remarkable that there are many passages in his gospel which are decisively in favour of his simple humanity.

Now these evangelists could not imagine that either the *Jews* or the *Gentiles*, for whose use the gospels were written, would stand in no need of information on a subject of so much importance, and which was so very remote from the apprehensions of them both; and which would at the same time have so effectually covered the *reproach of the cross*, which was continually objected to the Christians of that

age. If the doctrine of the Trinity be true, it is, no doubt, in the highest degree important and interesting. Since, therefore, the evangelists give no certain and distinct account of it, and say nothing of its importance, it may be safely inferred that it was unknown to them.

Why was not the doctrine of the *Trinity* taught as explicitly, and in as definite a manner in the *New Testament*, at least, as the doctrine of the Divine *Unity* is taught in both the *Old* and *New Testaments*, if it be a truth? And why is the doctrine of the *Unity* always delivered in so unguarded a manner, and without any exception made in favour of the Trinity, to prevent any mistake with respect to it, as is always now done in our orthodox catechisms, creeds, and discourses, on the subject? For, you cannot deny but the doctrine of the Trinity looks so like an infringement of that of the Unity, on which the greatest possible stress is always laid in the Scriptures, that it required to be at least hinted at, if not well defined and explained, when the divine Unity was spoken of. You are content, however, to build so strange and inexplicable a doctrine as that of the Trinity upon mere inferences from casual expressions, and cannot pretend to one clear, express, and unequivocal lesson on the subject.

There are many, very many passages of Scripture, which inculcate the doctrine of the Divine Unity in the clearest and strongest manner. Produce one such passage in favour of the Trinity, if you can. And why should we believe things so mysterious, without the clearest and most express evidence?

VII. I would further recommend it to your consideration how the apostles could continue to call Christ *a man*, as they always do, both in the book of *Acts* and in their *Epistles*, after they had discovered him to be God? After this, it must have been highly degrading, unnatural, and improper, notwithstanding his appearance in human form. Custom will reconcile us to strange conceptions of things, and very uncouth modes of speech; but let us take up the matter *ab initio*, and put ourselves in the place of the apostles and first disciples of Christ.

They certainly saw and conversed with him at first on the supposition of his being a man as much as themselves. Of this there can be no doubt. Their surprise, therefore, upon being informed that he was not a man, but really God, or even the maker of the world under God, would be just as great as ours would now be on discovering that any of our

acquaintance, or at least a very good man and a prophet, was in reality God, or the maker of the world. Let us consider, then, how we should feel, how we should behave towards such a person, and how we should speak of him afterwards. No one, I am confident, would ever call that being a *man*, after he was convinced that he was *God*. He would always speak of him in a manner suitable to his proper rank.

Suppose that any two men of our acquaintance should appear, on examination, to be the angels *Michael* and *Gabriel*, should we ever after this call them *men*? Certainly not. But we should naturally say to our friends, "Those two persons whom we took to be men, are not *men*, but *angels in disguise*." This language would be natural. Had Christ, therefore, been any thing more than man, before he came into the world, and especially had he been God, or the maker of the world, he never could have been, or have been considered as being *a man* while he was in it; for he could not divest himself of his superior and proper nature. However *disguised*, he would always, in fact, have been whatever he had been before, and would have been so *styled* by all who truly knew him.

Least of all would Christ have been considered as a man in *reasoning* and *argumentation*, though his external appearance should have so far put men off their guard as to lead them to give him that appellation. Had the apostle *Paul* considered Christ as being any thing more than a man with respect to his *nature*, he could never have urged, with the least propriety or effect, [1 *Cor.* xv. 21,] that, "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." For it might have been unanswerably replied, "This is not the case: for indeed by man comes death; but not by man, but by God, or the creator of man under God, comes the resurrection of the dead."

VIII. There is also another consideration which I would recommend to you who maintain that Christ was either God or the maker of the world under God. It is this: the manner in which our Lord speaks of himself, and of the power by which he worked miracles, is inconsistent, according to the common construction of language, with the idea of his being possessed of any proper power of his own, more than other men had.

If Christ was the maker of the world, and if in the creation he exerted no power but what properly belonged to himself, and what was as much *his own* as the power of speaking or walking belongs to man, (though depending

ultimately upon that Supreme Power in which we all live, and move, and have our being,) he could not with any propriety, and without knowing that he must be misunderstood, have said, that, *Of himself, he could do nothing;* that the *words which he spake were not his own;* and that *the Father within him did the works.** For, if any ordinary man, doing what other men usually do, should apply this language to himself, and say that it was not he that spake or acted, but God who spake and acted by him, and that otherwise he was not capable of so speaking or acting at all, we should not scruple to say, that his language was either sophistical, or else downright false or blasphemous.

If this conclusion would be just, upon the supposition that Christ had created all things, working miracles by a power properly his own, though derived ultimately from God, much more force has it on the supposition of his working miracles by a power not derived from any being whatever, but as much originally in himself as the power of the Father.†

It would also be a shocking abuse of language, and would warrant any kind of deception and imposition, if Christ could be supposed to say, *thas his Father was greater than he*, and at the same time secretly mean only *his human nature*, whereas his divine nature was at the same time fully equal to that of the Father.‡ Upon the same principle, a man might say that Christ never suffered, that he never died, or rose again from the dead, meaning his divine nature only, and not his human. Indeed, Sir, there is no use in language, nor any guard against deception, if such liberties as these are to be allowed.

IX. You must, Sir, be much at a loss indeed for arguments in support of your doctrine of the Trinity, when you look for any thing like it in Heathen antiquity. "The notion of a Trinity," you say, "more or less removed from the purity of the Christian faith, is found to be a leading principle in all the ancient schools of philosophy, and in the religions of almost all nations; and traces of an early popular

* *John* v. 30; xiv. 10, 24. See Vol. XIII. pp. 169, 314, 315.

† That *Christ* was not the real maker of the world, but *God the Father*, only, without the aid or instrumentality of any other being whatever, is abundantly evident from the Scriptures. For a most satisfactory proof of this, I refer my readers to Mr. Lindsey's *Sequel* to his *Apology* (Ch. ix.), pp. 451—454.

If it be said that this great pre-existent being was divested of his former powers when he became man, it may be asked, what use was there of such a being? Why might not a mere man have answered the purpose, if this superior being must be reduced to the state of man, in order to act his part on earth with propriety? (*P.*)

‡ See, on *John* xiv. 28, Vol. XIII. p. 316.

belief of it appear even in the abominable rites of idolatrous worship."* "Their information" concerning it, you say, "could only be drawn from traditions, founded upon earlier revelations," (meaning than those of *Moses,)* "from scattered fragments of the ancient patriarchal creed; that creed which was universal before the defection of the first idolaters, which the corruptions of idolatry, gross and enormous as they were, could never totally obliterate. Thus the doctrine of the Trinity is rather confirmed than discredited by the suffrage of the Heathen sages; since the resemblance of the Christian faith and the Pagan philosophy in this article, when fairly interpreted, appears to be nothing less than the consent of the latest and the earliest revelations."†

Without troubling you with any remarks upon the "joint worship of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, the triad," as you call them, "of the Roman capitol," or "the THREE MIGHTY ONES, in Samothrace," to which you say they may be "traced," and the worship of which in that place you suppose, with Eusebius, to "be earlier than the days of Abraham;"‡ I say, without troubling you with any remarks upon this most obscure part of Heathen mythology, concerning which there are many opinions, and yours, I think, the least probable of them all, I will only ask you three questions, to which I beg your explicit answer:

First; if there be so many traces of the doctrine of the Trinity in the Heathen philosophy, and in the Heathen worship, why are there no more of them to be found in the Jewish Scriptures and in the Jewish worship? Secondly; if there be such traces of the doctrine of the Trinity in the Jewish writings and worship, how came the Jews in our Saviour's time, and also the body of the Jewish nation to this day, not to discover these traces? Thirdly; if the Jews had been once in the possession of this knowledge, but had lost it in the time of our Saviour, why did not he, who rectified other abuses, rectify this, the most important of them all? *Tertullian* was so far from imagining that the worship of the Trinity was known to the Jews, that, as I have observed, § he makes the knowledge of the Trinity peculiar to the Christian dispensation. The same was the opinion of *Athanasius*, and, I believe, of the fathers in general.

As to the Trinity of *Plato*, whatever you or I may know, or may not know, concerning it, it was certainly a thing

* *Charge*, p. 44. *(P.)* *Tracts*, pp. 44, 45.
† *Charge*, p. 45. *(P.)* *Tracts*, pp. 45, 46.
‡ *Charge*, p. 44. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 44.
§ Vol. V. p. 43.

very unlike your *Athanasian* doctrine; for it was never imagined that the three component members of that Trinity were either *equal* to each other, or, strictly speaking, *one*.

Every attempt that has yet been made to *explain* the doctrine of the Trinity I scruple not to call an insult on the common sense of mankind. When I read that of yours mentioned above, viz. that the Father is the fountain of deity, and that the second person in the Trinity was produced by the first person contemplating his own perfections, I can hardly help fancying that I am got back into the very darkest of the dark ages, or at least, that I am reading *Peter Lombard*, *Thomas Aquinas*, or *Duns Scotus*.

You speak of the *Catholic doctrine of the Trinity*. There is also, Sir, a Catholic doctrine of *Transubstantiation;* and if you would try your skill, you would find that, with the same kind of arguments, from reason and scripture, you would be just as able an advocate for the one as you are for the other. The learned Catholics, at the time of the Reformation, thought that they trod on as firm and as sure ground in defending the latter, as you now do in defending the former. The two doctrines are so nearly akin, that they cannot bear a long separation. They differ only in this, that the doctrine of Transubstantiation implies a *physical impossibility*, whereas that of the Trinity, as unfolded in the *Athanasian* Creed, implies a *mathematical* one; and to this only we usually give the name of *contradiction*.

I am truly concerned to find by your *Charge*, published at the request of the respectable body of clergy to whom it was delivered,* that the doctrine of a Trinity, in its most objectionable form, must be maintained at all events by the proper members of the Church of England as its most sacred palladium. Other divines of your church have attempted to explain and palliate it, so that it might be hoped that, in time, it would have been explained away and lost, and at length have been struck out of your articles and forms of worship; whereas now, it seems, it is to be maintained in all its rigour; and as you recommend the writings of Bishop Bull, without exception,† I presume you approve of his defence of the *damnatory clause* in the *Athanasian* Creed,‡ (indeed you mention this among his most valuable works,) and this, in my opinion, is going back into all the darkness and horror of Popery. But as you cannot bring back those

* See *Tracts*, p. v. † *Ibid.* pp. 65, 66.

‡ Mistated for "the anathema annexed to the Nicene Creed." See Part ii. Let. xvi.

times, your damnatory clauses and excommunications will now have little effect. Yet, as there are liberal sentiments in your performance, I am willing to hope that, on reconsideration, you will, at least, retract your recommendation of *that* piece of your favourite author.

However, next to the church's reforming itself in this important article, it is to be wished by all the true friends of reformation, that your *terms of communion* * may be universally understood and adhered to; for then I am confident that a majority of the thinking clergy, whose sentiments on this subject are in general, I believe, those of Dr. Clarke, or *Arian*, and many of them *Socinian*, would quit your communion at once. And in that case I have little doubt but that the characters and abilities of those *ejected clergy* would be found to be such as you could not now bear the want of; and then either a reformation, *invitâ ecclesiâ*, or a total dissolution of the hierarchy, would immediately follow.

I am, &c.

LETTER VIII.

Miscellaneous Articles.

DEAR SIR,

I. To vindicate *Eusebius*, or his author, in asserting that *Theodotus* was the first who advanced the doctrine of Christ being a mere man, you say, "that Theodotus in this article so far surpassed the earlier heresiarchs, that the merit of being the inventor of the meer humanity, in the precise and full meaning of the words, is, with great propriety and truth, ascribed to him. When the Cerinthians and the Ebionites affirmed that Jesus had no existence previous to Mary's conception, and that he was literally and physically the carpenter's son, it might justly be said of them, that they asserted the meer humanity of the Redeemer; especially as it could not be foreseen that the impiety would ever go a greater length than this, of ascribing to him an origin meerly human. These heretics, however, went no further, as I conceive, than to deny our Lord's original divinity: they admitted I know not what unintelligible exaltation of his nature, which took place, as they conceived, upon his ascension, by which he

* *Charge*, p. 71. *(P.)* "It is a maxim of Dr. Priestley's," says Dr. Horsley, "that every man, who, in his conscience, dissents from the Established Church, is obliged in conscience to be a declared Dissenter. I honour the generosity of the sentiment." *Tracts*, pp. 71, 72.

became no less the object of worship than if his nature had been originally divine."*

This, as far as I know, is advanced on your own authority only. I desire to know where you find that the *Ebionites* paid any kind of adoration to Christ after he was ascended to heaven, more than *Theodotus* did. As the extraordinary power communicated to Christ, while he was on earth, did not make his *nature* more than human, so neither could any power conferred upon him after his ascension; and if God alone is the proper object of worship, Christ, being still *not God*, is as improper an object of worship now as he was before. If any ancient Unitarians worshipped Christ after his ascension, (of which I believe there is no evidence,) *Theodotus* might do it, and the *Ebionites* might not, for any thing that appears to the contrary. *Socinus* prayed to Christ, though he considered him as a mere man, in his present exalted state.

As to your supposition that Theodotus might be the first person who taught the Unitarian doctrine in Rome,† which is a second plea which you advance for the credit of Eusebius, he himself says nothing about it. And as Tertullian says, that in his time the Unitarians were the *greater part of the believers*,‡ it is highly improbable that there should be none of them at Rome, where there was a conflux of all religions and of all sects.

You here speak of the *impiety* of the Unitarians. Before you repeat any expressions of this kind, I beg you would pause a little, and consider how such language might be retorted upon yourself. If it be impiety to reduce a God to the state of a man, is it not equally impious to raise any man to a state of equality with God, that God who has declared that he will not give his glory to another, who has no equal, and who, in this respect, styles himself a jealous God? This you may say respects the gods of the Heathens. But what were the Heathen gods but either the sun, moon and stars, or dead men, all creatures of God, and deriving their power from him? And if Christ be not *God*, he must be a creature of God too; for there can be no medium between creature and creator.

I do not call it impiety in you, but it sounds unpleasantly in my ears, to apply, as you do, the term *holy Father* to *Athanasius*. The Catholics, I believe, apply it to *Ignatius*

* *Charge*, p. 37. *(P.) Tracts*, pp. 37, 38. † See *ibid.* p. 39.
‡ See *supra*, p. 17, *Note* †; *Appendix*, Nos. V. VI.

Loyola. Our Saviour applied it to his God and Father, and I wish it had always remained so appropriated. It is high time to drop that style, even with respect to a more holy man than Athanasius was.

II. In a work of great variety and extent I was well aware that I could not expect to escape all oversights; but I was confident they could not be of much consequence. The expectation has been verified in both its parts. You have set me right with respect to the exactness of two of my *quotations;* and I should have thanked you for it if you had noted the oversights with good nature, which would have done you no discredit, and might not have lessened the weight of your animadversions.

But in some of the cases in which you pretend to set me right, you are much more mistaken than I have been. This is particularly the case with respect to your censure of Dr. Clarke and myself, concerning the *piety* ascribed to the ancient Unitarians by *Origen.* I have lately procured the original, and I appeal to our readers whether you have not misrepresented the fact, and not Dr. Clarke or myself.

You say, that "Origen says, not that they were pious, but that they boasted that they were pious, or affected piety. Piety," you add, "and the affectation of piety, belong to opposite characters."* According to you, therefore, *Origen* considered these Unitarians as impious persons, the very reverse of pious. But if the passage be carefully inspected, it will appear that *Origen*, notwithstanding he uses the word ευχομενας, was far from representing these ancient Unitarians as only *pretending to piety*, and *boasting* of it; but considered them as persons who really dreaded lest, by admitting Christ to be God, they should infringe upon the honour that was due to the Father only.

"By these means," he says, "may be explained that which greatly disturbs many persons, who plead a principle of piety, and who fear to make two Gods."† He afterwards recurs to the same subject, and introduces it as an objection of persons with whom he would not trifle, and whom he was far from charging with hypocrisy. "But since," he says, "it is probable that many may be offended, because we say that one is the true God, namely the Father, and besides this true God there are many who are made gods by participa-

* *Charge*, p. 34. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 34.

† Και το πολλους φιλοθεους ειναι ευχομενους ταρασσον, ευλαβουμενους δυο αναγορευσαι Θεους. *Comment. in Johannem*, ed. *Huetii*, 1668, II. p. 46. D. *(P.)*

tion; fearing that the glory of him who excels all creatures should be brought down to that of others who attained the appellation of gods, &c."* On the whole, therefore, I think that *Origen* must have thought as respectfully of these early Unitarians as I had represented him to do, and that he really considered them as objecting to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ from the very best principles.

In translating the passage in Theophilus, in which mention is made of God's speaking to nothing but his own *word* and *wisdom*, I inadvertently used the particle *or* for *and*,† as you observe;‡ but I do not see how the right translation is at all less favourable to my argument, as it may still be interpreted of God's speaking, as it were, to *himself*, or to *his own attributes*, and by no means necessarily implies that the *word* and *wisdom* of God were distinct persons. However, I have other instances in proof of what I have advanced that are not liable to any charge of ambiguity, which it therefore behoved you to consider.

I also mistranslated a sentence in *Theophilus*, concerning his *Trinity*.§ It was in consequence of his using a singular verb instead of a plural; but I have no doubt of your translation‖ being right, and shall adopt it. I am still, however, fully satisfied, that neither *Theophilus*, nor any person of his age, made a proper *Trinity of persons in the Godhead;* for they had no idea of the perfect equality of the second and third persons to the first.

You say, "that they scrupled not to ascribe an equal divinity to all the three persons."¶ If by *equal divinity* you mean something that might be equally called *divine*, though in a different sense, I admit it; but that will make nothing for *your* Trinity. And that the fathers, before the Council of *Nice*, asserted, in the most explicit manner, the superiority of the Father to the Son, see my third section, in which you will find unanswerable proof of it.

Whenever the *Antenicene* fathers used the term *God*, absolutely, they always meant the Father only, as you do not

* Αλλ' επει εικος προσκοψειν τινας τοις ειρημενοις, ἑνος μεν αληθινε Θεε τε Πατρος απαγγελλομενε, παρα δε τον αληθινον Θεον Θεων πλειονων τη μετοχη τε Θεε γινομενων, ευλαβεμενες την τε πασαν κτισιν ὑπερεχοντος δοξαν εξισωσαι τοις λοιποις της Θεος προσηγοριας τυγχανεσι, &c. *Comment. in Johannem*, ed. *Huetii*, 1668, II. p. 47. C. (*P.*)

† Vol. V. p. 31. See *Appendix*, No. III.

‡ *Charge*, p. 48. (*P.*) See *Tracts*, pp. 47—50. § Vol. V. p. 62.

‖ *Charge*, p. 59. (*P.*) "The three days, which preceded the creation of the luminaries, were types of the Trinity; of God, and of his Word, and of his Wisdom." *Tracts*, pp. 60, 61.

¶ *Charge*, p. 61. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 62.

deny. But if, in their idea, the Father had been no more entitled to the appellation of God than the Son, or the Spirit, they would certainly have confined the use of the word God to express *divinity in general*, and have used the word *Father*, and not *God*, when they really meant the Father only, exclusively of the two other persons. Had there been no proper correlative to the word *Son*, as a person, your explanation might have been attended to; but since the term *Father* is perfectly correlative to the term *Son*, and as familiar, it would certainly have been used by them to denote the Father, as well as the term Son to denote the Son. It is natural, therefore, to conclude, that their custom of using the term God to denote the Father only, was derived to them from earlier times, in which no other than the Father was deemed to be God, in any proper sense of the word. This language was continued long after, from a change of ideas, it ceased to be proper.

Very happily the word God is still, in common use, appropriated to the Father, so that none but professed theologians are habitually Trinitarians, and probably not even these at all times; and while the Scriptures are read without the comments of men, the Father alone will be considered as God, and the sole object of worship, exclusively of the Son or the Spirit. But while a different doctrine is taught in Christian schools,* and continually held up to the world in the writings of Christian divines, those who are not Christians, and who will not take the pains to study the Scriptures themselves, must receive a very unfavourable impression of our religion; and the manifest absurdity and impiety of our doctrine will effectually prevent its reception by them. I therefore think it of the greatest consequence to Christianity, that this doctrine of the Trinity (which I consider as one of its most radical corruptions) should be renounced in the most open and unequivocal manner by all those whose minds are so far enlightened as to be convinced that it is a corruption and an innovation in the Christian doctrine, the reverse of what it was in its primitive purity, and that they should exert themselves to enlighten the minds of others. I am, &c.

* The *Catechuman* of the *Church of England*, on rehearsing the miscalled Apostles' *Creed*, which contains no hint of a *Trinity*, is immediately asked, "What dost thou chiefly learn in these articles of thy belief?" The reply is unqualified *Tritheism*, for he is taught to believe "in God the Father—in God the Son," and "in God the Holy Ghost." The *Assembly of Divines*, with more caution, make their Catechumen declare that the "three persons in the Godhead are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory." Such is the *milk for babes* provided by these *nursing fathers*.

THE CONCLUDING LETTER.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE now finished my Reply to your animadversions on my *History*, omitting nothing that I think to be of any consequence to your argument. If you should think that I have overlooked any thing material, and please to point it out to me, I will answer it as explicitly as I can; for I hope that this will only be the beginning of our correspondence on the subject, as I would gladly discuss it with you in the fullest manner.

I only wish for your own sake, and for the more advantageous investigation of the truth, that you would drop that sarcastic manner of writing, which is so conspicuous in the greater part of your performance, and, I should think, peculiarly improper for the occasion on which it was composed. That mode of writing is also inconsistent with the compliments you sometimes pay me, unless you meant them to be ironical also.

Some of those compliments are, I think, rather imprudent, and unfavourable to your purpose. "In philosophical subjects," you say, "Dr. Priestley would be the last to reason from principles assumed without proof; but in divinity and ecclesiastical history he expects that his own assertion, or that of writers of his own persuasion, however uninformed or prejudiced, should pass with the whole Christian world for proof of the boldest assumptions."*

You should, indeed, Sir, be cautious how you lay these things before your readers, because it is very possible that they may draw a very different conclusion from them, and think that, if I have been so cautious and so successful in the investigation of truth in one province, I may, having the same talents, make the same successful application of them in other provinces; for the same *mental habits* generally accompany the same men in every scene of life, and in every mode of exertion. Your readers, therefore, may think it very improbable that a work written with so much care and attention, by such a person as you describe me to be, should deserve the character which you give of mine. "No work," you say, "was perhaps ever sent abroad under the title of a *history*, containing less of truth than his, in proportion to its

* *Charge*, p. 29. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 28.

volume."* The passages which I have quoted are gross and coarse insults; but they affect yourself only, and not me. This is more extraordinary, as in other parts of your work you write with great candour and liberality. Your *conclusion*† I particularly admire. My address to you on the subject of *necessity* was uniformly respectful.‡

It was particularly illiberal in you, and what I am willing to hope you will never repeat, to use the term *conventicle*, in speaking of the places of public worship in which I and Mr. Lindsey officiate.§ Would not that contemptuous appellation have applied equally well to the societies of the primitive Christians, or to those of all the Dissenters from the Church of Rome before the Reformation? And what is it that has given your places of public worship a more honourable title, but the sanction of the *civil powers*, with which my religion never had any *alliance?* I glory in such independence and opprobrium.

By *conventicle* is usually meant an *unlawful assembly*. But since the late act of parliament in favour of Dissenters, our places of worship are as *legal* as yours. The only difference between them is, that ours are not supported by the wealth of the state as yours are; so that I am unjustly compelled to contribute to your maintenance,‖ while you, instead of paying any thing towards mine, insult me for it. Our *meeting-houses* are equally known to the laws, and protected by them. If by conventicles you meant nothing more

* *Charge*, p. 66. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 66, 67.

† "Though truth," says Dr. Horsley, "in these controversies can be only on one side; he (the advocate of that form of sound words, which was originally delivered to the saints) will indulge, and he will avow, the charitable opinion, that sincerity may be on both. And he will enjoy the reflection, that by an equal sincerity, through the power of that blood which was shed equally for all, both parties may at last find equal mercy.

"In the transport of this holy hope he will anticipate that glorious consummation, when faith shall be absorbed in knowledge, and the fire of controversy for ever quenched. When the same generous zeal for God and truth, which too often, in this world of folly and confusion, sets those at widest variance whom the similitude of virtuous feelings should the most unite, shall be the cement of an indissoluble friendship; when the innumerable multitude of all nations, kindreds and people, (why should I not add, of all sects and parties?) assembled round the throne, shall, like the first Christians, be of one soul, and one mind, giving praise with one consent to Him that sitteth on the Throne, and to the Lamb that was slain to redeem them by his blood." *Tracts*, pp. 72, 74, 75.

‡ See Vol. IV. pp. 150, 152, 155.

§ *Charge*, p. 38. *(P.)* "It was, therefore, that sublime doctrine, which is at this day taught in the conventicles of Dr. Priestley and Mr. Lindsey, the doctrine of our Lord's meer undeified humanity, that Theodotus, the learned tanner of Byzantium, a deserter of his Lord, and a fugitive from his country, broached at Rome, in the end of the second century." *Tracts*, pp. 38, 39. See *supra*, pp. 107, 108.

‖ See, on this *complaint*, Vol. XV. p. 392, *Note* *.

than a term of reproach, the good manners of the present age ought to have protected them from such an insult.

If your pride, as *a churchman*,* and the contemptuous airs you give yourself with respect to Dissenters, be founded on the idea of your being a member of a great *establishment*, pray, Sir, what is your church establishment in this country? It is a thing of yesterday compared to the far more ancient and venerable Church of Rome, whose members consider you as a *schismatic* and a *sectary* as much as myself. If, on the contrary, you boast of your *separation from the Church of Rome*, that *mother of harlots and abominations*, consider that the community of Christians to which I belong is several removes further from her than yours, and is therefore less likely to be *one of those harlots* of which she is the *mother*.

On any consideration, therefore, I think that a style of greater modesty would have become you better. The time is approaching that will try every man's work, what it is; and if we learn the pure faith of the gospel, and our lives be conformable to it, it will not then be inquired whether we learned it in a *church* or a *conventicle;* in a church such as you have access to and from which I am excluded, or in such *conventicles* as the apostles were contented with.

As you strongly and repeatedly recommend the writings of Bishop Bull, with which, I own, I was but little acquainted, I have been induced to purchase them; and having *looked pretty carefully through them*, I find they have been the chief storehouse of weapons to yourself and others. Having found, therefore, *where your great strength lies*, I cannot help wishing that you would publish the whole of your great champion's works in English, and thus *put forth all your strength* at once. It would give me sincere pleasure to see you do this, and at the same time to avow yourself their defender.

As you rank yourself among those "whom the indulgence of Providence has released from the more laborious offices of the priesthood,"† to whom your "more occupied brethren

* *Charge*, p. 71. (*P.*) Where Dr. Horsley thus lauds his *best-constituted church:* "An extensive erudition in Pagan as well as Christian antiquity, joined with a critical understanding of the sacred text, is that which hath so long enabled the clergy of the Church of England to take the lead among Protestants as the apologists of the apostolic faith and discipline; and to baffle the united strength of their adversaries of all denominations." *Tracts*, p. 71.

† I find no trace of any Christian priesthood in the New Testament, except what belongs to all Christians, who are figuratively styled kings and priests unto God. *(P.)*

have a right to look up—for support and succour in the common cause," this may be one of the *services* to which you "stand peculiarly engaged," as well as to answer my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*. "It is," you say, "for them" (speaking of those among whom you rank yourself) "to stand forth the champions of the common faith, and the advocates of their order. It is for them to wipe off the aspersions injuriously cast upon the sons of the establishment, as uninformed in the true grounds of the doctrine which they teach, or insincere in the belief of it. To this duty they are indispensably obliged by their providential exemption from work of a harder kind. It is the proper business of the station which is allotted them in Christ's household; and deep will be their shame, and insupportable their punishment, if in the great day of reckoning it should appear that they have received the wages of a service which hath never been performed."*

I am glad, Sir, to find that you have so just a sense of the important duties of your elevated situation; and, thinking the translation of Bishop Bull's works to be naturally comprised in your description of the duties incumbent upon you in it, I am ready to join with your "weaker brethren,"† as you call them, (whose attainments you represent as very low,) in inviting you to undertake it; imagining, as I sincerely do, that the cause of truth will be promoted by it; and to some of those *weaker brethren* it may be more agreeable, as well as take up less time, to read Bishop Bull's works in English than in Latin. In my opinion, no writings are more easy to be refuted than those of this bishop; and though encumbered with what you call the laborious offices of the priesthood, as well as engaged in a variety of other pursuits, I shall not think it any great addition to my labours if I undertake to reply to you, thus ably as you may think yourself supported.

You have, I perceive, some advantages which I have not, especially in having access to *scarce books*. I, for instance, had not so much as heard of the work of Daniel Zwicker, from which you suppose I have borrowed most of my arguments; whereas you appear to be well acquainted with it, and all the writings of that author, or you could not have said as you do, "Nor is a single argument to be found in the writings either of Zwicker or Episcopius, which is not unanswerably confuted by our learned Dr. George Bull, afterwards Lord Bishop of St. David's, in three celebrated

* *Charge*, p. 5. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 4, 5. † *Ibid.* p. 4.

treatises, which deserve the particular attention of every one who would take upon him to be either a teacher or an historian of the Christian faith."*

You should not, however, have charged me with borrowing from a work which, though in your possession, you might have known was not very common. A learned friend, whom I desired to inquire for it, tells me that it is not to be found at any bookseller's in London, in the British Museum, or in the Bodleian or Sion Libraries; and that at last he inquired of particular persons most likely to have it, but none of them could tell him where it was to be met with.† I shall endeavour, however, to make the most of such books as I have, and in time I may be able to procure more.

But what is of more importance than any thing else in these studies is, a sincere love of truth, and a cool and patient investigation of it, which I shall endeavour to cultivate. I hope also to keep my mind always open to conviction, and that I shall not neglect to avail myself of any light that may be furnished me, from friend or from foe.

Hoping to hear from you as soon as your leisure will permit, and assuring you of the pleasure it will give me to continue this correspondence, till each of us shall have advanced what may occur to us on the subject,

I am, dear Sir,
Your very humble servant,
J. PRIESTLEY.

Birmingham, November, 1783.

* *Charge*, p. 9. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 9.

† I find in the *General Biographical Dictionary*, under the article *Comenius*, that Zwicker wrote *three defences* of his original work, entitled *Irenicon Irenicorum*, in answer to Comenius; and that Bishop Bull was accused by D. Crellius of not having read those pieces, for want of which he censured Zwicker for some things which he otherwise would not have objected to him. *(P.)* See *supra*, p. 48.

The titles of *Zwicker's* works, to which Dr. Priestley here refers, are thus given by *Sandius:*

"Irenicum Irenicorum, seu Reconciliatoris Christianorum hodiernorum Norma triplex; sana omnium Hominum Ratio, Scriptura sacra, et Traditiones. Amstelædami a. 1658, 12 Novemb. 8°.

"Irenico-Mastix prior, seu nova Confirmatio *Irenici* contra *Comenium*, a. 1661, 15 Januarii, 8°.

"Irenico-Mastix posterior, iteratò victus et constrictus, imò obmutescens, seu novum et memorabile Exemplum infelicissimæ Pugnæ Dn. Joh. *Amos Comenii*, contra *Irenici Irenicorum* Autorem, a. 1662, 19 Martii, 8°.

"Ejusdem pars specialis, seu finalis Confutatio *Comenii, Hoornbeckii*, et aliorum, a. 1662, 15 Septembris circiter: in titulo tamen 1667, annus positus est, in 8°." *Bibliotheca Anti-Trinitariorum*, 1684, pp. 152, 153.

Besides these, *Zwicker* left in MS., on the same subject, "Responsio ad Friderici Sylvii scriptum, cui talem dederat titulum; 'Dissertatio Epistolaris ad CL. virum *Danielem Zwickerum*, Socinianæ de persona Christi sententiæ hodie Promachum, quâ επικρισις subjicitur, super certamine ejus cum celeberrimis viris DD. Ioh. *Amoso Comenio* et *Iohanne Hoornbeckio*, et pugna instauratur.'" *Ibid.* p. 156.

REMARKS*

ON THE

ARTICLE OF THE MONTHLY REVIEW FOR SEPTEMBER, 1783,†

IN

Answer to the Reply

TO SOME

FORMER ANIMADVERSIONS IN THAT WORK.‡

A WRITER in the *Monthly Review* having made an elaborate answer to my *Reply* to his former animadversions on my history, it will be expected that I take some notice of it. On its own account I certainly should not have thought it necessary, any more than I should with respect to his former remarks. But being written in a specious and imposing manner, as the former were ; and especially having the advantage of going without expense into the hands of almost all readers, I shall notice an article or two in it, in which he himself evidently thinks that he has the most advantage, and only give my opinion in general with respect to the rest.

As to the *temper* with which this controversy has been conducted, I appeal to our readers, whether my *Reply* was not *candid* and *temperate*, beyond what his first remarks were entitled to; and whether his Answer be not extremely *uncandid* and *insolent*. I do not pretend to be a judge in my own cause. I know, however, that, whereas he supposes I used the term *criticiser* by way of contempt, I only used it for the sake of variety, instead of *critic*, *reviewer*, &c. meaning simply *one that criticises*.

After quoting a passage from *Justin Martyr*, I added, "This language has all the appearance of an apology for an opinion contrary to the general and prevailing one ; as that of the humanity of Christ (at least with the belief of

* P. S. No. X. of "Letters to Dr. Horsley," 1783. See *supra*, p. 46.
† See *supra*, p. 37. ‡ *Ibid.* pp. 3—37.

the miraculous conception) probably was in his time."* This the *Reviewer* called a *very great inconsistency*. "The Doctor," he says, "has no right to insert his *at least with the belief of a miraculous conception*. The insertion is entirely arbitrary; and those who know less of the author's character than we do, and may not have the same well-grounded assurance of his integrity, may possibly be led to imagine that he introduced those words only to give some colourable pretext to his own principles."

This I scrupled not to call *a groundless and perverse misrepresentation* of my meaning; that part of the sentence in which mention is made of the *miraculous conception* being expressive of an opinion of my own, and for which I make myself only answerable. The sentence is therefore perfectly unexceptionable, and very far from giving just cause for such an alarming exclamation as the *Reviewer* makes use of.

This, however, he has the assurance to defend; and, confident of his advantage in the argument, he even quotes the whole Section in my *Reply* relating to this subject; and then says, "We carefully revised what we had written, and as carefully compared it with the passage in Dr. Priestley's History which occasioned the reflection we make. The revisal, instead of convincing us that we had misconceived or misrepresented Dr. Priestley's meaning, fully convinced us that we had done neither; and we now a second time repeat what Dr. Priestley has been pleased to call an almost unparalleled instance of groundless and perverse misrepresentation."† He rests his vindication on that part of the sentence in which mention is made of the miraculous conception, being an *inference* from the passage in Justin. "*As such*," he now says, "we found fault with it."

Now I assert, as I did in my *Reply*, that this clause is *no inference* at all, but an independent observation of my own, in support of my inference, or rather of part of it only; and if it be otherwise, I profess that I have no knowledge of language, and that I am not able to express my own meaning. If I understand myself, the whole sentence may be paraphrased as follows: "What *Justin* here advances appears to me to have the air of an apology for an opinion of his own, different from that of the majority of Christians in his time. The opinion which he mentions as not his own, is, that Christ was a mere man, and even the son of *Joseph* as

* See *supra*, p. 16.

† *Mon. Rev.* LXIX. p. 244. *(P.)*

well as of *Mary*. Now I will not venture to say that this opinion was more prevalent than that of Justin; but if we add to those who held this opinion, those who, believing Christ to be a mere man, held that he had no human father, I think it probable that those two classes of Christians, taken together, were more numerous than those who, with *Justin Martyr*, held the doctrine of Christ's pre-existence."

This, I will venture to say, no person can doubt was my real meaning; and though it is concisely, it is not, I think, obscurely expressed. With a person who can misunderstand so plain a sentence, consisting of no more than two members, and persist in his misconstruction, after its being particularly pointed out to him, and his professing to have given all due attention to it; and also with one who can think it natural (as he does*) that *Tertullian*, or any man, would represent his opponents as more numerous than they really were, in order to express his *contempt* of them, it is absolutely impossible for me to hold any argument. We want common language and common principles. It is, as the *Reviewer* says, to bring the question to an issue *at once*. We have nothing more to say, and our judges must decide between us.

He cannot express his confidence more strongly than he has done; and to what I have already said, I will now add, that I not only think he has misrepresented my meaning, but that, considering all the circumstances, and epecially his persisting in it, as he now does, it will not be easy to produce any misrepresentation of a writer's meaning so groundless and so perverse as this, in any controversial writing. And yet, though this case is so clear that I might safely appeal to any person who understands English, it is very possible that, instead of any *kissing of the rod*, which he promised, or any other answer, he will quote all that I have now written, and repeat his accusation a third time.

I shall now consider another article on which the *Reviewer* lays great stress, and which is the first part of his answer to my *Reply*. It is what he calls his *strong reason* for some material but unknown difference between the *Ebionites* and the *Nazarenes*; and it seems that we both of us have the same authority for our very different opinions on this subject. "It is somewhat singular," he says, "that the passage to which the Doctor has sent us, by a marginal

* *Mon. Rev.* LXIX. p. 228. *(P.)*

reference, (for he has not *quoted* one word from it,) should turn out to be the very passage that we intended to produce, if we should be called upon for that *strong reason* by which we were inclined to think that the members of both sects differed considerably in articles of faith, notwithstanding there was such a point of agreement between them in the outward services of religion as might in the end lead to a nearer intercourse," &c.*

I shall now produce the passage, beginning a little earlier than the *Reviewer* has done, and then give my translation of it, which any person who understands Latin may compare with his: "Si hoc verum est; in Cherinti et Hebionis hæresim dilabimur, qui credentes in Christo, propter hoc solum à patribus anathematizati sunt, quod legis cærimonias Christi Evangelio miscuerunt, et sic nova confessi sunt, ut vetera non amitterent. Quid dicam de Hebionitis, qui Christianos esse se simulant? Usque hodie per totas orientis synagogas inter Judeos hæresis est, quæ dicitur Mineorum, et à Pharisæis nunc usque damnatur, quos vulgò Nazareos nuncupant, qui credunt in Christum, filium Dei, natum de virgine Maria, et eum dicunt esse, qui sub Pontio Pilato passus est, et resurrexit, in quem et nos credimus: sed dum volunt et Judæi esse, et Christiani, nec Judæi sunt nec Christiani." This I translate as follows:

"If this be true, we fall into the heresy of Cherintus and Ebion, who, believing in Christ, were anathematized by the fathers on this account *only*, that they mixed the ceremonies of the law with the gospel of Christ, and held to the new *(dispensation)* in such a manner as not to lose the old. What shall I say concerning the Ebionites, who pretend that they are Christians? It is to this very day, in all the synagogues of the East, a heresy among the Jews, called that of the Minei, now condemned by the Pharisees, and commonly called Nazarenes, who believe in Christ, the son of God, born of the virgin Mary, and say that it was he who suffered under Pontius Pilate, and rose again; in whom also we believe. But while they wish to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither Jews nor Christians."

This, the Reviewer says, after Bishop Bull, is the "clearest testimony for a difference between the Ebionites and Nazarenes, *testimonium apertissimum*." It is indeed *apertissimum*, a testimony *exceedingly open* to refutation.

Can any instance be brought of a writer closing his

* *Mon. Rev.* LXIX. p. 216. (*P.*)

account of a thing with saying, *What shall I say concerning it?* * After such an expression as this, we naturally expect that he should proceed to say something concerning it, which this author most evidently does; observing, that the same people who were called *Ebionites*, (by the *Gentiles*,) were called *Minei* and *Nazarenes* by the *Jews*. Had he meant to describe any other class of people, he would naturally have begun his next sentence with *Est et*, or *Est alia hæresis*, and not simply *hæresis est*. As to his speaking of heresy in the second sentence, and not *heretics*, as in the first, it is a most trifling inaccuracy in language, the easiest of all others to fall into, and of no consequence to the meaning at all. Besides, *Jerome's* account of these two denominations of men is exactly the same; the *Ebionites* being *believers in Christ*, but *mixing the law and the gospel;* and the Nazarenes *wishing to be both Jews and Christians*, which certainly comes to the very same thing.

The *Reviewer* lays great stress on our author's saying that the Ebionites *pretended* to be Christians; but in the part which is omitted by him, *Jerome* calls them *credentes in Christo*, believers in Christ; and if they believed in Christ at all, they could not believe much less than he himself represents the *Nazarenes* to have done. He may say that they only pretended to be Christians, but were not, because they had been excommunicated. But what had they been excommunicated for? Not for any proper imperfection of their faith in Christ, in which they were inferior to the Nazarenes, but only *(solum)* because they mixed the ceremonies of the law with the gospel of Christ; which, in other words, he asserts of the Nazarenes also, when he says, they *wished to be both Jews and Christians*. And though he does not say that the Nazarenes were *excommunicated*, he says they were *not Christians*, which is an expression of the same import.

This passage, the *strong reason*, the *testimonium apertissimum* of my opponent, I might have urged as decisive in favour of the identity of the *Ebionites* and *Nazarenes;* but I only said, "I also *think* it may be clearly inferred from it, that the *Ebionites* and *Nazarenes* were the same people."† As to the term *Minei*, it only means *sectaries* in the Hebrew language.

* The Reviewer translates *Quid dicam de Hebionitis*, by *But why should I speak of the Ebionites*.—For, &c. Let the reader judge between us; observing that there is nothing in the original to correspond either to his *but* or his *for*, and the more usual meaning of *quid* is *what*, and not *why*. (*P.*)

† *Reply*. (*P.*) *Supra*, p. 10.

Had there been any *foreign reason* why we should suppose that *Jerome* meant to distinguish between the *Ebionites* and the *Nazarenes*, we might have hesitated about the interpretation of his meaning, easy as it is; but certainly there can be no cause of hesitation, when it is considered that in this he agrees not with *Epiphanius* only, but with the whole strain of antiquity, as is allowed by *Le Clerc*, and all the ablest critics; and to interpret his meaning as Dr. Bull and the *Reviewer* do, is to set him at variance with all other writers.

The *Reviewer* says, "Why were the Cerinthians omitted? Jerome places them with the Ebionites in the preceding sentence; and if the Nazarenes and the Ebionites were the same people, it may, with equal clearness of evidence, be inferred that they were the same people with the Cerinthians likewise."*

I answer, they were the same people, as far as *Jerome* then considered them, because they were equally zealous for the law of Moses.

I cannot help thinking that by this time the *Reviewer* is not disposed to lay quite so much stress on this *strong reason* as he did at first; for before he has done writing about it, he contents himself with calling it a *conjecture* only. But the conjecture is as improbable as the *reason* was weak.

Since I wrote the above, I find that *Suicer*, in his *Thesaurus*, under the article *Ebion*, makes the same use of this passage of *Jerome* that I have done, and considers the *Nazarenes* as a branch of the *Ebionites;* and that the *Reviewer* hath been misled in his construction of this passage by Dr. Bull, of whom he, as well as Dr. Horsley, entertains a very high opinion. On the contrary, I think no writer has been more effectually answered than he has been.

What the *Reviewer* says of the quotation from *Athanasius*, and which he calls "something very serious indeed,"† I have fully considered in my *Letters to Dr. Horsley;*‡ and as to his quotation from *Barnabas*, he will find that article well explained by Mr. Lindsey.§ This is a work from which this writer might learn a great deal.

As to every thing else in this answer of the *Reviewer*, I can truly say, that, after perusing it with care, I see no reason to wish that I had said any thing otherwise than I have done in my former *Reply* to him, except that I understood

* *Mon. Rev.* LXIX. p. 216, *Note.* *(P.)* † *Ibid.* p. 232. *(P.)*
‡ *Supra*, pp. 69—77. § "In the *Sequel* to his *Apology*," pp. 428—433.

him too literally in what I observed in my Fifth Section. As to all the rest, I think it would be trifling with my own time, and that of my readers, to make any remarks upon it.

To shew that I do not say this merely to get rid of the business, I declare, that if any person, *giving his name*, shall request my attention to any particular part of it, and procure me a place in the *Monthly Review*, I will speak to it as fully and as explicitly as I can; and I do not think that I should require much room to give a very satisfatory answer to any article in it. I only wish for a public and impartial hearing. In the name of truth I only say, δος πθ ςω.*

In the mean time, as this writer has already produced his "greatest objection" against me,† "something very serious indeed,"‡ and his "strong reason,"§ I hope he will not stop here, but proceed to his *stronger* and his *strongest* reason, or any other new mode of alarming the public, and of prejudicing their minds against my work, though it should require two or three more *additional sheets of letter-press* for the *Reviews* which shall contain them. It will answer my wishes in drawing more attention to the subject, and procure me a better hearing *in the end;* and that is all that I wish for in this argument.

As this writer affects to be restrained from saying all that he could do by his respect for me, I wish he would lay aside all ceremony of this kind; and, in order to invite him to perfect freedom, I will add, that the idea I first formed of his *learning* and *ability* is much lessened since the perusal of his last article, and of his reply to my learned and judicious friend; and what is of more consequence, I perceive a still greater deficiency in that *candour* and *freedom from prejudice*, without which, learning and ability only serve to mislead a man, and enable him to mislead others.

I do not complain of the conduct of the *Review*, or the writers in it, for their late change of manner, and their leaning to the side of orthodoxy. All men are at liberty to change their opinions and their conduct, as they see reason. They have thought proper, however, to make an *apology*

* For this, among other purposes, such a publication as the *Theological Repository* would be of excellent use. It was with great reluctance that I gave up that favourite scheme; but at that time the demand was not sufficient to indemnify the publisher. In such a periodical publication as this, questions might be proposed and answered, without putting the proposer, or the answerer, to any expense; and all serious inquirers after truth would have an opportunity of having any important subject fairly discussed, without any person improperly making himself both judge and party. *(P.)* The *Theol. Repos.* was revived in 1784.

† *Mon. Rev.* LXIX. p. 221. *(P.)* ‡ *Ibid.* p. 232. *(P.)*

§ *Ibid.* p. 216. *(P.)*

for their conduct with respect to myself, pretending that they only act on the *defensive;* when the first part of the review of my work was written in the spirit and manner of the most professed polemic, without the appearance of a fair review. If it could be called a review, nothing in any form could be more evidently calculated to discredit any work.

I will add, that Mr. Bewly, a considerable writer in the *Monthly Review*, lately dead, was exceedingly offended at the first article of the review of my work. Such conduct, he said, was highly improper in a *Review*, and, independent of any regard to me or to the subject, (in which he did not at all interest himself,) he said, that from the first sight of it, he was determined to remonstrate with the Editor on account of it. What would he have said to the Review for September, in which, even with *an additional sheet of letter-press*, the answer to my small pamphlet takes up more than one-third of the whole; and especially if he had seen it puffed off in an *advertisement*, drawn up for the purpose, in which no other article is specified besides this answer; and in which it is said, "the Reviewer maintains his former charges against the Doctor's work, and supports them with additional arguments, and more copious authorities"?*

* "Dr. Horsley," says a contemporary critic, "is not the only antagonist with whom Dr. Priestley has had to contend. The person who gave an account, in the Monthly Review, of the History of the Corruptions of Christianity, entered into the subject with so much zeal, and was so greatly dissatisfied with the doctor's representations of the sentiments of the early Christians, with regard to the pre-existence of our Lord, that, in remarking upon these representations, he seemed rather to sustain the character of a direct adversary than that of a reviewer. The article was written with spirit and learning; but, at the same time, there was a kind of a triumphant petulance in it, which is no necessary part of the duty of a literary journalist.

"Both Dr. Priestley's Animadversions [in his *Reply*] and his friend's 'Remarks [in Vindication,' *supra*, pp. 17, 45, *Notes* *] received such large and specific answers in the Monthly Review, as were judged to be contrary to the nature of that journal; and, on this account, they gave dissatisfaction to many judicious and impartial men, who agreed in sentiment with the Periodical Critic, and admired his abilities and literature. It was, in fact, taking the undue advantage of a particular situation, to publish what ought to have appeared in separate pamphlets." *New An. Reg.* 1783, IV. pp. [229], [230].

REMARKS

ON

THE MONTHLY REVIEW,

OF THE

Letters to Dr. Horsley;

IN WHICH

THE Rev. Mr. SAMUEL BADCOCK,

The Writer of that Review,

IS CALLED UPON TO DEFEND WHAT HE HAS ADVANCED IN IT.

He that walketh uprightly walketh surely.

Solomon.

[*Birmingham,* 1784.]

PREFACE.

In answer to some who, I well know, will be ready to blame me for replying to charges proceeding from such gross *ignorance* and evident *malignity*, as those contained in the *Monthly Review*, I would observe, that many persons (as I sincerely rejoice to find) are extremely anxious about the progress of this controversy, relating to *the general opinion of the primitive Christians, concerning the person of Christ*, as, with them, it will be nearly decisive with respect to their believing him to be *a man*, or something *more than a man;* and I think I owe them every assistance that I am able to give them.

Many of these persons, not having the proper authorities at hand, have it not in their power to judge between my opponents and me, except by comparing what one writer shall produce in answer to another; and being themselves earnest searchers after truth, and men of upright minds, they cannot easily bring themselves to suspect any writer of *gross unfairness* till it is distinctly pointed out. They are, therefore, staggered when they hear things so confidently asserted,

and so speciously represented, as they are by my present antagonists. Now the small trouble of writing such a pamphlet as this, is a trifle, compared to the satisfaction that I know I shall give to many persons of the description abovementioned.

Besides, preparatory to the large *Historical View of Opinions concerning the Person of Christ*, which I propose to write, and for which I am collecting materials, I wish, by every means in my power, to bring every thing of consequence relating to it to a thorough discussion, and to draw out, if possible, every *latent objection;* that I may have the whole subject, with its proper evidence, fairly before me; and controversy, when a person has a proper command of his temper, is an excellent means to that end.

I acknowledge, however, that I should not have noticed any thing that has yet been advanced by Mr. Badcock on this subject, if it had not been out of regard to the credit which it derives from its publication in the *Monthly Review*, and the advantage of circulation which he has by that means secured. Besides, I am not now answering an *anonymous* antagonist; but a man engaged, by a regard to his reputation, to bring his charges to an issue, by which means some advantage will be gained. Indeed, as an anonymous Reviewer, the following declaration binds him to an explicit answer to what I here allege in my own just defence, in reply to his virulent accusations:

"When attacked by so formidable a disputant as Dr. Priestley, we could not avoid defending ourselves, as the reputation of our work was at stake. If—we have obtained any advantage over our learned opponent, we exult not in our success, but honestly declare, that we wish not to be again called to battle in the field of controversy, which generally produces more briars than laurels. It behoves us, however, to be always prepared to answer every unjust charge, and to clear ourselves from every aspersion."*

That I may not, however, multiply these small publications unnecessarily, and more than the object of them requires, I assure those who have confidence in my integrity, (for it can signify nothing to address those who consider me in the light that Mr. Badcock does,) that I shall not write in this manner again, unless I receive something from Mr. Badcock more deserving of a reply than any thing that I have yet seen come from him on this subject; though I shall certainly

* *Mon. Rev.* for October, 1783, LXIX. pp. 359, 360. (*P.*)

take some early opportunity of acknowledging any mistake, of the least consequence, that I shall be convinced I have fallen into. I shall, at least, do it when I next reply to Dr. Horsley, which I hope will not be at a distant period. In the mean time I will, in return, have that confidence in my readers, that they will not be much moved by any future representations of Mr. Badcock, unless they be *more specious*, and *more imposing*, than those which I have already shewn to be merely so.

REMARKS

ON

THE MONTHLY REVIEW.

INTRODUCTION.

I HAD not intended to have taken any notice of the Monthly Review of my *Letters to Dr. Horsley*,* seeing nothing in it that, in the smallest degree, affected my argument, or that was, on any other account, worthy of notice; but finding some persons (though sufficiently sensible of the *malevolence* with which the charges against me are urged) rather staggered with the extreme *boldness* of the assertions, and those more than implying a charge of the grossest *unfairness* and *insincerity* in my conduct, I have, at length, thought proper to make a few observations upon it. In doing this, I think myself authorized by the *nature*, and the almost unexampled *insolence* of the attack, in mentioning (what indeed is no secret) the name of the Reviewer, viz. *Mr. Samuel Badcock*, a dissenting minister at South Molton, in Devonshire; as (without having directly or indirectly sought for it) I have been informed since the publication of my *Letters to Dr. Horsley*. It was, indeed, mentioned to me before; but when I considered our former friendship, I did not give any credit to the account. His own vanity, I presume, on his imagined victory over me, has led him to betray himself. As a writer, no man, I will venture to say, has been more observant of punctilio than I

* *January*, 1784, LXX. pp. 56—69.

have been; but when a man's *moral character* is arraigned, as mine very materially is, in this publication, he certainly has a right to the name of his accuser, if he can come at it. Indeed, no man of honour will advance such a charge against another without, at the same time, giving his own name. Also, in referring to my former acquaintance with Mr. Badcock, I reveal no secret, for I believe it is as generally known as Mr. Badcock himself is.

I shall select from this *Review* the most plausible, and the most confident of all the charges, as a specimen of the rest; and let any impartial person, of competent knowledge of the subject, judge between us.

SECTION I.

Of the Omission of the Sentence in Justin Martyr.

I HAD observed that *Justin Martyr* treats the *Unitarians* of his age with great tenderness, at the same time that he treats those whom he calls *heretics*, with much asperity; saying, as the *Reviewer* quotes from me, "There are two passages in this writer, in which he speaks of *heretics* with great indignation;—but in both the passages he has evidently a view to the *Gnostics* only. He particularly mentions the *Marcionites*, the *Valentinians*, the *Basilideans*, and the *Saturninians*.* He says, 'they blasphemed the Maker of the world, and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob:' that 'they denied the resurrection, and maintained, that after death the soul went immediately to Heaven.'—Had he considered the Unitarians, with whom he appears to have been well acquainted, as heretics, would he not have mentioned or *alluded* to their tenets also in those passages in which he speaks, and pretty largely, of the Christian heretics in general? It is impossible, I should think, to read those passages as they stand in the original, introduced as a fulfilment of our Saviour's prophecy, that there should be false Christs and false prophets, who should deceive many; and not be satisfied that, like the apostle John,

* "Και αλλοι αλλῳ ονοματι (—'*and others under another name*'—) follows in the original, though unnoticed in Dr. P.'s translation. At the same time, we must observe, that Dr. P. has misquoted the name of the last-mentioned sect, by copying from the Latin version, instead of the original Greek, where it is Σατορνιλιανοι, *Saturniliani*." [*Mon. Rev.* LXX. p. 61, *Note.*]

This I suppose was meant to insinuate that I do not, perhaps that I *cannot*, read Greek. It would, however, have been pedantry to use the term *Saturnilus*, *Saturninus* being much more common both with the ancients and moderns. *(P.)*

Justin Martyr had no idea of there being any *heretics* in the Christian church in his time, besides the *Gnostics.*"*

On this the *Reviewer* remarks as follows: "As Justin is much connected with our controversy with Dr. Priestley, we hope Dr. Horsley will excuse us for anticipating a remark which we are persuaded he would of necessity make on this passage. The remark might be extended much farther, with a long retinue of '*exclamations*,' but our limits oblige us to be as brief as possible. In general, then, we make no scruple of asserting, in the most direct and unqualified language, (for Dr. Priestley desires us to use no ceremony,) that in the above representation of Justin's sentiments, we meet with the most flagrant and unaccountable mutilation of a plain passage, that the disingenuity of a controvertist, who is determined to 'keep it up,' *per fas et nefas*, ever presented us with. We beg the reader to turn back to Dr. Priestley's quotation from Justin, and compare his translation with the original. He (i. e. Justin) says, 'They blaspheme the Maker of the world, and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' Now, this is so put, as to convey to the English reader, or the unlearned, (*for* whom Dr. Priestley appears chiefly to write; but how came he to forget that he was writing *to* Dr. Horsley?) that the translation is *so managed* as to convey no idea of distinction in Justin's mind, between the *Maker of the world*, and the *God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.* For the sake both of the learned and unlearned, we will transcribe the original passage, and annex to it a literal translation: Αλλοι γαρ κατ' αλλον τροπον βλασφημειν τον ποιητην των ὁλων ΚΑΙ ΤΟΝ ὑπ' αυτθ προφητευομενον ελευσεσθαι ΧΡΙΣΤΟΝ και τον Θεον Αβρααμ, και Ισαακ, και Ιακωβ, διδασκουσιν, i. e. 'Others, upon another plan, teach (*their followers*) to blaspheme the Maker of the universe, AND HIM who was before spoken of as coming from him, *even he who was the* CHRIST, and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' Now, to prove even beyond the possibility of dispute or evasion, that by the *God of Abraham*, &c., Justin meant Christ, (to say nothing of the independent evidence arising from the passage,) we refer the reader to his celebrated *Apology* to the Emperor Antoninus Pius, (Thirlby's ed. pp. 93, 94.) in which this expression is not only applied to Christ allusively, but even vindicated as his own appropriate and distinct character. After quoting the passage, Exod. iii. 2, &c., at full, Justin says, '*These words*

* *Mon. Rev.* LXX. p. 61. (*P.*) See *supra*, p. 65; *Appendix*, No. IV.

were uttered purposely with a design to prove that the Son of God, and his Messenger, is Jesus Christ; who was the pre-existent Logos; and who sometimes appeared in the form of fire, sometimes in the similitude of angels, &c. &c.' Immediately after he blames, in very severe language, the '*senseless Jews*' (ανοητοι Ιουδαιοι) for *affirming that these words were spoken by the Maker of the universe.* Would he not have said the same of an Ebionite, who, like these *infatuated Jews*, must, on the principles of his own creed, have denied the application of these words to Christ? (See also the Dial. with Trypho, pp. 300, 408, and elsewhere.)

" Dr. Priestley somewhere speaks of Dr. Horsley's disingenuity* in concealment; can he point out any thing like this? He somewhere says, that the Monthly Reviewer *writes in a specious and imposing manner.* We ask, in our turn, *who* translates so? Can *he* cast the stone who hath (to all appearance purposely) left out a whole member of a sentence; and that too, a most essential one; and by artfully dropping the middle part of it, hath entirely misapplied the conclusion? We are afraid that his very *Vindicator* cannot excuse him, even on the score of what he calls the Doctor's '*rapid glances.*' But rapid glances, though they suit a *poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling*, do not well agree with the sober and steady observation of an *historian.*"†

This is the whole of Mr. Badcock's remark on the passage: and I think it is hardly possible for the heat of controversy to carry any man farther than this. The whole of it, however, is answered *at once*, by observing, that it is to no sort of purpose who it was that *Justin* meant by *the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, (which Mr. Badcock may find in my own History,‡ and which no person who knows any thing of Justin can be ignorant of,) but who it was that the *heretics* he is speaking of meant by the person so described, and whom they meant to blaspheme; and this, certainly, was not *Jesus Christ*, but *another being*, the supposed maker of the world, the author of the Jewish dispensation, and the introducer of much evil, which, they said, Christ was sent

* This is an exaggeration of my language. What I said was, *not perfectly ingenuous*, which, when the passage is consulted, no person can say was harsh or improper. See *Letters*, &c. [*supra*, p. 54, *ad fin.*]. Whereas Dr. Horsley has charged me with several instances of gross disingenuity, and all of them manifestly unjust. Among other things, he charged me with wilfully misquoting the common English translation of the Bible. A thing so gross as this, would certainly have been censured in an impartial review. This, however, Mr. Badcock did not censure. (*P.*)

† *Mon. Rev.* LXX. pp. 61, 62.

‡ See Vol. V. p. 31.

to rectify. They were, therefore, the *Gnostics only*, and not *Unitarian Christians* that he was reflecting upon, or alluding to; and this is the only circumstance on which my inference was founded.

The omission Mr. Badcock speaks of, was made merely to shorten a long Greek quotation, without leaving out any thing that could affect the sense. That by the αλλοι *Justin* could not mean any *other kind of people* besides those he had spoken of before, is evident from his using the particle γαρ, *for*. In this connexion, I maintain, that αλλοι γαρ κατ' αλλον τροπον, &c., can bear no other sense than, *for some of them* (viz. of those mentioned, or alluded to before, and also mentioned by name immediately afterwards) *blaspheme the Maker of the world*, &c., *in one way, and others in another;* and will by no means bear to be translated as Mr. Badcock does, *others upon another plan*, &c. For this I am willing to appeal to any person who has the least pretensions to a knowledge of the *Greek* idiom. Had *Justin* said αλλοι δε, *but*, instead of αλλοι γαρ, *for*, there would have been some slight colour for Mr. Badcock's construction of the passage; but at present there is not a shadow of pretence, either from the *phraseology*, or the general *sense* of the passage, in his favour.

That Mr. Badcock should not have been able to understand the Greek of *Justin* is the more extraordinary, as the idiom of the Latin tongue is the very same with that of the Greek in this respect. If he will only look into *Ainsworth's* Dictionary, he will see "Alius alio modo," *(Cicero,)* rendered "one after one sort, another after another."

If Mr. Badcock really thinks that these blasphemers of *the Maker of the world* were persons who blasphemed *Jesus Christ*, by lowering him to the condition of a man, and not the *Gnostics*, of whom there were many distinctions, as *Justin* had just observed, (and who, therefore, blasphemed him, *some in one way, and some in another*,) he is as ignorant of ecclesiastical history as he appears to be of Greek. I will venture to say, he has not, as he pretends, anticipated Dr. Horsley in *this* criticism, and I am willing to appeal to Dr. Horsley himself for it. If the decision be in my favour, (of which there can be no doubt,) I shall require of Mr. Badcock an acknowledgment as *public* as his offence, and as *full* as it is *heinous*.

Writing in the circumstances in which I do, and inviting criticism from all quarters, if I had had no principle of *integrity* at all, I certainly should not have concealed any thing

that I must have known my adversary could not possibly overlook. The omission,* therefore, could not, at most, have been any thing more than either an inadvertence, or have arisen from a misunderstanding of the passage and its importance, which a generous adversary would have treated with tenderness.

To shew more distinctly the nature of this omission, on which Mr. Badcock has declaimed so copiously, I shall translate the whole passage, distinguishing the words omitted; by which it will be seen, that I *could* not mean any thing by the omission, but to save myself the trouble of writing so much Greek. Mr. Badcock has also made several omissions, I presume for the same reason, in the extract from my letters.†

"There are, and have been, many persons who, pretending to be Christians, have taught to say and to do atheistical and blasphemous things, and they are denominated by us from the names of the persons whose doctrines they hold, *(for some of them blaspheme the Maker of the universe, and him who was by him foretold to come as the Christ, and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,‡ in one way, and others in another,)* with whom we have no communication; knowing them to be atheistical, wicked, and impious persons; who, instead of reverencing Jesus, confess him in name only. They call themselves Christians, in the same manner as those among the Heathens inscribe the name of God on the works of their own hands, and defile themselves with wicked and atheistical rites. Some of them are called Marcionites, some Valentinians, some Basilideans, some Saturninians, and others go by other names, each from their peculiar tenets; in the same manner as those who addict themselves to philosophy are denominated from the founders of their respective sects. And, as I have said, Jesus, knowing what would come to pass after his death,

* See the first of the additional paragraphs, at the end of the *Remarks*.

† *Supra*, p. 128. See *Mon. Rev.* LXX. p. 58.

‡ It is really something extraordinary, that this opinion of *Justin Martyr's*, that Christ was the medium of all the divine communications to mankind under the Old Testament dispensation, should have been so readily received, and have spread so generally as it did, when it not only has no countenance from Scripture, but is expressly contradicted by the author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, in *Heb.* i. 1: "God, who, at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers, by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." Again, (ii. 2. 3,) "If the word spoken by angels was stedfast,—how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord?"—What can be more evident than that the writer of this epistle had no idea of God having spoken to mankind by his Son before the time of the Gospel? (*P.*) See Vol. XIV. p. 347.

foretold that there would be such men among his followers."

A man who can fancy there is a reference to any other persons than the *Gnostics* in this passage, may fancy that he finds the detested *Unitarians* in any other page of the same author; or, like Don Quixote, he may take a windmill for a giant; for the difference between the ancient Unitarians and the Gnostics was as great as this. Their opinions are generally spoken of as two *opposite* heresies.

SECTION II.

Of the Creed of Tertullian.

It will be no less easy for me to shew the extreme weakness or unfairness of Mr. Badcock's observations with respect to the *creed* which he quotes from *Tertullian*, and which he supposes I *purposely* kept out of sight; saying, "Few are so *very* courageous as to put such a weapon in the hand of an adversary, as threatens to demolish them."*

Without retorting this observation on Mr. Badcock himself, I shall observe, that in the treatise *De Præscriptione*, &c., from which Mr. Badcock quotes the *Regula Fidei*, Tertullian is evidently giving his own gloss, or interpretation, of the creed, and not the creed itself, as delivered to the *Catechumens*. In writing this work, his great object was the *Gnostics*, and therefore his gloss is directed altogether against them, and does not respect the *Unitarians* at all; as, indeed, the very first article (omitted by Mr. Badcock) shews. *Regula fidei—qua creditur unum omnino Deum esse, nec alium præter mundi conditorem, qui universa de nihilo produxerit*, &c.; that is—"by which we are taught to believe that there is but one God, and this no other than the maker of the world, who produced every thing out of nothing by his own word, then first sent down; that that word was called his Son; that he appeared variously in the name (that is, *in the character*) of God, to the patriarchs; that he was afterwards conveyed, by the spirit and power of God the Father, into the virgin Mary; that he was made flesh in her womb, and from her (*egisse*, perhaps *exisse*) appeared in the person of Jesus Christ; that he thence preached a new law, and a new promise of the kingdom of heaven," &c.

* *Mon. Rev.* LXX. p. 60. (*P.*)

All this is evidently a *gloss*, and not a *simple creed*. Whereas, in the treatise *De Velandis Virginibus*, from which I have quoted the creed,* he is not opposing *orthodoxy* to *heterodoxy*, but *faith* to *practice*, and was therefore much more likely to give the simple creed, as it was delivered to the *Catechumens* in his day. Accordingly, it is nearly the same that is now generally received. Let the four ancient copies of the creed, viz. the *Vulgar*, that of *Aquileia*, the *Oriental*, and the *Roman* be compared as they are done by *Dupin*,† and it will be seen that none of them contain any such articles as those in *Tertullian's* gloss. If those articles ever made a proper part of the creed, how came they to be dropped, and indeed to be found no where else?

That Mr. Badcock has entirely mistaken the object and real meaning of what he has given as the creed in the time of *Tertullian*, and that it refers to the *Gnostics only*, is evident from every article relating to God and Christ in it. The Gnostics maintained that the Supreme Being himself, the Father of Jesus Christ, did not make the world, but that it was the work of a different being, the same that appeared to the patriarchs and prophets, but entirely different from the Christ. On the contrary, all the articles above recited from Tertullian's gloss upon the creed, are evidently intended to express, that the immediate maker of the world, the *Logos*, or *Verbum Dei*, was the same person that appeared to the patriarchs and prophets, and was also afterwards the Christ.

It appears to me, (but I submit the conjecture to the learned,) that the *Gnostics*, who gave so much alarm to the primitive Christians, had advanced so many specious arguments, to prove that the Supreme Being himself was not the immediate maker of the world, and the author of the *Jewish* dispensation, that the orthodox were, in fact, staggered by them; and so far conceded to them, as to content themselves with maintaining that the being who made the world, and who appeared to the patriarchs and prophets, though not the Supreme God himself, was the word or power of that God personified; so as to become a *second God*, really different from the first; taking advantage of some expressions in the *Old Testament*, and also of the language of *John* in the introduction to his gospel. For of the same *logos*, or *word*, which *John* personified figuratively, (as *wisdom* is personified in the book of *Proverbs*,) they made a *real* and *permanent person*.

* See *supra*, p. 63, *Note* †.

† *Eccles. Hist.* I. p. 12. (*P.*)

Gnosticism, therefore, as well as *Platonism*, was a great means of establishing the doctrine of the *personification of the Logos*, which was the first step towards the modern *Athanasian* doctrine of the Trinity. In fact, the orthodox use many of the same arguments with the *Gnostics*, to prove that the Supreme God himself was not the person who appeared to the patriarchs, &c.

On the whole, it must, I think be evident to the impartial reader, that the proper creed in the time of Tertullian was that which I produced from him as such in my *Letters to Dr. Horsley*;* whereas, that which Mr. Badcock has produced expresses no more than *Tertullian's* own faith, which is not the question in debate. Indeed, how could Tertullian consider that as the established creed assented to by every catechumen, which, according to his own account, was not believed by those whom he (out of *contempt*, Mr. Badcock will say) represents as the *major part* of Christians in his time?

SECTION III.

Miscellaneous Articles.

I AM tempted to give a few other specimens of Mr. Badcock's mode of reviewing, and shall begin with his most extraordinary remarks on the manner in which I have treated an opinion of *Eusebius's*.

"With respect to the suffrage of Eusebius to the orthodoxy of the primitive church, and particularly of the bishops of Jerusalem, towards the close of the apostolic age; a suffrage so full and explicit, that it hath been deemed a decisive argument against Dr. Priestley's hypothesis (viz. *that this primitive Jewish church, and its bishops, were pure Ebionites)*, with respect to this testimony, we say the Doctor could only find one way of getting rid of it. 'It is not,' says he, 'to be regarded.' What a prodigious advantage this short and compendious method of decision gives a man over his opponent! It saves all the needless expense of criticism. It serves instead of a thousand arguments, and it has the singular felicity of being sheltered from all reply!"†

After reading this, any person would naturally imagine, that I had given *no reason at all* why I thought that the assertion of *Eusebius* was not to be regarded, whereas I immediately subjoin such reasons as I deemed sufficient;

* See *supra*, p. 63. † *Mon. Rev.* pp. 59, 60. *(P.)*

observing that the *facts* which he himself records, are inconsistent with it. The *Reviewer* has not even quoted the whole sentence, which ends thus: "it is not to be regarded, unless they bring some sufficient proof of their assertion."* I am truly ashamed to point out instances of such gross disingenuity, even in an adversary, and one who pretends that he has given "the very pith and marrow," of my arguments.† After this, with what face can Mr. Badcock charge any writer with *concealments!*

Dr. Horsley having charged me with borrowing from *Daniel Zwicker*, whose name I had not heard till I saw it in his Charge, Mr. Badcock says, "Dr. Horsley did not happen to hit upon the right author."‡ Then let Dr. Horsley and Mr. Badcock guess again. As all my arguments *must* be *stolen* from some person or other, they may happen to be right at last.

After this, it cannot, surely, be necessary to note any other article in this *Review*, every one of which discovers nearly equal *ignorance* or *unfairness*.

Mr. Badcock calls upon me to give "a fair and ingenuous answer" to his "former animadversions."§ I reply that, besides my own fair proposal, by which I still abide, and which will require no more room in the article of *Correspondence* than is frequently given to others, (not to say that their having made my case a *singular* one, gives me a claim to peculiar privileges,) I have directly or indirectly, noticed every thing in it that I thought worth notice, in my *Letters to Dr. Horsley*. He, as a *Reviewer*, has an unspeakable advantage with respect to *publication*. My confidence, however, is in the goodness of my *cause*, and in *time;* which, I doubt not, will do me ample justice.

Two articles, on which Mr. Badcock himself laid the most stress at first, I particularly noticed in the *Postscript* of my Letters to Dr. Horsley.‖ One of them related to a strong insinuation against my *integrity*, in consequence of his own misconstruction of a plain sentence of mine. He had defended his misconstruction after its being particularly pointed out to him; but being called to look at it *a third time*, he has, at length, given it up, and asked my pardon;¶ so that my integrity has had an escape for this time. This, it is to be observed, relates to the *greatest objection* he had

* See *Letters to Dr. Horsley. (P) Supra*, p. 61.
† *Mon. Rev.* LXX. p. 65. *(P.)* Speaking of Dr. Priestley's *Reply*.
‡ *Ibid.* p. 58. *(P.)* § *Ibid.* p. 65. ‖ See *supra*, pp. 117—122.
¶ *Mon. Rev.* LXX. pp. 65, 66.

against my History.* He pleads in his excuse, that my expression was "equivocally worded;"† whereas it is not possible to put any other construction upon it, and I am not capable of expressing myself with greater clearness.

If Mr. Badcock fails so much with respect to *plain English*, it is no wonder that (through his extreme precipitancy I suppose) he should make mistakes in *Latin* and *Greek*. I have sufficiently considered what he first called *a strong reason* for a material difference between the *Nazarenes* and the *Ebionites*, what he afterwards called a *conjecture*, and now calls a *demonstration;* but I do not think it worth my while to shew the extreme *futility* of it. To such demonstrations as these, I shall content myself with saying, *Valeant quantum valere possunt*. If Dr. Horsley chooses this ground, I shall meet him upon it, and speak fully to it.

THE CONCLUSION.

I CANNOT say that I can entirely satisfy myself with respect to the cause (and every *effect* must have a *cause*) of the extreme virulence with which Mr. Badcock began, and now continues, to urge this attack upon me, so totally unprepared as he evidently is to discuss topics of this nature.

I own I sometimes read his former letters to me with peculiar emotion, and am ready to think this whole business a dream; so unwilling am I to believe that any person who once professed himself so much attached to me, can be so much at enmity with me, as he now appears to be. Far am I from wishing that *truth* should ever be sacrificed to *friendship*, or any other consideration. I have shewn an example of the contrary myself, in my controversy with Dr. Price; but Mr. Badcock's situation with respect to me should have led him to adopt a more decent mode of opposition.

Time was, when, if it had been foretold to Mr. Badcock, that he would ever do what he now has done, he would, I am confident, have replied as *Hazael* did to the prophet, [2 *Kings* viii. 13,] "What, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" But as Hazael did not then know that he would become *king of Assyria*, so neither did Mr. Badcock foresee that he would ever be a *Monthly Reviewer*.

* See *supra*, p. 19, *Note* ‡. † See *Mon. Rev.* LXX. p. 66.

The editor of the Monthly Review should be cautious how he suffers his writers to sport with men's characters; for himself, as *publisher*, is answerable for it. He may not be a judge in *matters of literature*, and therefore he may be deceived by recommendations, and by persons who give themselves airs as men of *deep learning;* but every man may see what kind of reflections affect *moral character*, and all know that this is a sacred thing. Mr. Griffiths* may not have much knowledge of *Greek*, and therefore would never suspect, that he who with so much insolence treated my *Vindicator*† with the appellation of "Iste *Græculus*,"‡ should make the mistake that he has done with respect to Greek; but having some knowledge of *me*, he should not have inserted such reflections as the present Review contains, at least without consulting other persons besides a professed opponent. He will hardly be able to justify himself to the public, not for employing a man so unqualified as Mr. Badcock is, (I mean with respect to the subject of the present controversy, in which I do not find that his reading has extended much farther than Bishop Bull,) but for suffering such *gross abuse* of a person that he must know *could* not deserve it.

As to what he promises with respect to my *future publications*, I presume that no person, about whose good opinion I can ever be solicitous, will take a character of any performance of *mine*, or of any thing that *relates to me*, from a *professed adversary*. Dr. Horsley's Charge, a work full of the highest orthodoxy, (such as certainly would not have passed without censure in this *Review* some years ago,) has been recommended with unqualified applause, and a careful selection has been made from it of almost every thing in it that is specious in itself, or contemptuous with respect to me.§ For this, I am pretty confident, Dr. Horsley will not now thank them; as by this time, I doubt not, he is

* Ralph Griffiths, a native of Shropshire, who became a bookseller in London. In 1749, in concert with Dr. Rose, he commenced the Monthly Review, of which he was for many years proprietor and editor. He was created LL.D. by an American College, and died in 1803, aged 83. Dr. Kippis was a very large contributor to the earlier volumes of this Review.

If Dr. Griffiths were more tenacious of pecuniary profit than of moral reputation, he probably had his reward, from the curiosity attracted to this controversy. The Number for January, 1784, now before me, containing the Review of the *Letters*, but no other article peculiarly attractive, is a *second edition;* a circumstance, I apprehend, very unusual.

† See *supra*, p. 45. ‡ *Mon. Rev.* LXIX. p. 247, *Note* †.

§ *Ibid.* p. 402.

himself ashamed of the passages they have quoted. My friend Mr. Lindsey has, in several publications, largely insisted upon *the Unitarianism of the primitive Christian Church*, (the very same thing that has roused all the rage of the present *Reviewer*,) without the least note of disapprobation from his predecessors.

I am now expecting Dr. Horsley's reply,* and I shall be much disappointed if it be not more guarded and temperate than his last work; so that I hope we shall proceed in a calm discussion of the serious question that is before the public. I also earnestly wish to engage some *learned Arian* in this discussion, as I am desirous to write with the fullest information, and with the greatest impartiality on the subject.

At present I am well aware that a great majority of learned men are against me; but I already perceive that the minority is increasing, and in time I doubt not the majority will be with me. Not that I can ever promise myself to satisfy every body. Many persons, much superior to myself, will remain unconvinced; as indeed many yet do with respect to *Transubstantiation*. But the time will certainly come, when all *prejudice* will give way to the evidence of *truth*.

I have much *new evidence* to produce, as well as many confirmations of that which I have already laid before the public, and I wish to have every part of it thoroughly and publicly discussed. Mr. Badcock calls me "a mortified and disappointed author."† How a man really *feels*, is best perceived by the *temper* with which he writes, and not by his own *declarations*, or those of others for him; and it is much too soon to use any language of this kind. The controversy is but just opened, and will probably continue a long time; and we may then see who are the mortified and disappointed writers.

When I read the various modes of self-complacent exultation, in which Mr. Badcock, and Dr. Horsley also, insult over me, as over a man whom they have completely confuted and silenced, I fancy myself to be in the case of the Irishman who talked of hearing his own funeral sermon. But I would advise these two antagonists of mine to take a lesson from *Æsop*, and not to sell the skin of the bear, till they have

* Which appeared in June 1784. See Bishop Horsley's *Tracts*, pp. 83—295.
† *Mon. Rev.* LXX. p. 57.

dispatched him, and indeed not till they have the evidence of other eyes than their own that he is actually dead. I am not, like *Partridge*, so unreasonable as to expect to be an evidence for my own existence; but let it be decided by a a fair jury, whether I be alive or dead.

For my part, I shall steadily pursue my purpose, and I have experience enough in these matters to be able to confide in my own temper so as to avail myself of all the new light that shall be thrown upon the subject, and to correct my own observations, as far as I shall see reason so to do. I may be deceived myself; but I believe that even my adversaries (except Mr. Badcock) will not think I shall knowingly contribute to deceive others.

There are not many persons, I hope, who will think of me as Mr. Badcock does: "Though it may be possible for any man to make a mistake (especially when he *rapidly glances* over a passage) yet to persevere in it after it has been pointed out, seems reserved to be the distinguishing characteristic of Dr. Priestley."* He should not, however, have said this in the same publication in which he acknowledges that he himself had done the same thing, and that he did not see his mistake till it had been pointed out to him *a third time.*†

Mr. Badcock might have animadverted upon my mistakes, real or supposed, with as much severity as he had pleased; I should not have been much affected by his censures, perhaps should not have taken any farther notice of them; certainly should not have called upon him *by name*, as I now do, if he had not represented me as *a dishonest man*, wilfully perverting the meaning of the authors I quote, and "determined to keep up" this controversy, as he says, "*per fas et nefas.*"‡ I do not, however, think so ill of him as not to hope, that, upon cooler reflection, he will be ashamed of accusations so violent and so ill-founded. Be this as it will, I trust that in this controversy, and in all my writings, as well as in my whole conduct, I have respect to a higher tribunal than either that of the *Monthly Review* or that of the *Public.*

When I wrote the preceding Pamphlet, I really imagined that I must have omitted to insert the sentence in Justin

* *Mon. Rev.* LXX. p. 63. (*P.*) † See *supra*, p. 136.
‡ *Mon. Rev.* LXX. p. 61.

which Mr. Badcock has introduced with so much emphasis, whereas a friend has just observed to me, that it is entire, and in its proper place, in my *Letters to Dr. Horsley.** I am, therefore, at a loss how to express my contempt for the whole of this accusation, or to apologize to the public for troubling them with any defence at all. I did not pretend to *translate* the whole of the passage, but only *abridged* it in the text, giving it at full length in the margin, for the sake of the *learned*, whose attention I must have wished to draw to it. Little did I foresee that it would be criticized by a person so *unlearned*, both with respect to the *subject* of which Justin was treating, or the *language* in which he wrote, as Mr. Badcock appears to be. How could he imagine that any man, in his senses, should intend to deceive *upon this plan*. I must have been as silly as the bird that is said to endeavour to escape by hiding its head, while its whole body was exposed.

I need give no other proof of the wanton and persevering rancour of my quondam very great admirer, Mr. Badcock, and likewise of the actual *effect* of his specious and imposing representations, than the extract which he himself has given from *a letter of Mr. Wise*, in the article of *Correspondence*, in the Review for February last. After replying to some objection which this Gentleman appears to have made to his translation of the passage in Justin Martyr, he adds, "We join very sincerely with our correspondent, in the following exclamation: 'Pity it is that ————, and writers that possess the confidence of the public, should be so astonishingly unskilful as they are for men of reputation; and so shamefully disingenuous in conveying to the public the sentiments of the ancients.'" †

Now what occasion was there to quote the latter part of this letter, which, I dare say, was not intended for publication, when the review of my work was closed? In this manner, by means of *Correspondence*, real or pretended, Mr. Badcock may go on to exhibit me as an example of *ignorance* and *disingenuous conduct*, as far as the Review circulates, and as long as he himself shall think proper.

I wish, however, that this Mr. Wise would not be quite so hasty in deciding against a character, which, by his own account, has hitherto been fair and irreproachable. Great

* See *supra*, p. 65.

† *Mon. Rev.* 1784, LXX. p. 167.

ignorance (or great *inattention*) is certainly chargeable to one of us; but let us both have a full hearing, and especially Mr. Badcock himself in reply to this,* before it be absolutely decided with which of us it lies. I shall be glad if he be able to make a better apology for himself than I can yet see to be possible.

Birmingham, Feb. 6, 1785.†

* Mr. Badcock does not appear to have taken any notice of the *Remarks*, unless he were the author of an anonymous "Letter to Dr. Priestley," 1784, "purposely written, as we understand," (say the *Reviewers,*) "in vindication of the Monthly Review." See *Mon. Rev.* 1784, LXXI. p. 73. This *Letter* "was concluded to be of Mr. Badcock's composition," by a writer in *New Ann. Reg.* 1784, V. p. [219].

† These four paragraphs were printed as an *Appendix* to the *Remarks*, and distributed some months after their publication. The date 1784, I have corrected, as it must have been an error. See p. 141, the account of *Correspondence*, February, 1784, which was not published till March.

LETTERS TO Dr. HORSLEY,

PART II.

CONTAINING FARTHER EVIDENCE

THAT THE

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN CHURCH WAS UNITARIAN.

——— Ubi sunt ingentia magni
Verba viri? ——— Ovid.

[*Birmingham*, 1784.]

PREFACE.

I am truly concerned that the discussion which I have entered into, of the historical evidence of the doctrine of the primitive ages concerning the person of Christ, has not taken the amicable turn that I proposed, and of which I gave a specimen in my former series of *Letters to Dr. Horsley*. Those were strictly argumentative, and likewise uniformly respectful; but as *his Letters*, in answer to me, are written in a style that is far from corresponding to mine, as the reader must perceive in every page, to reply to him in the same respectful manner in which I first wrote, would have been unnatural and absurd. In the present publication, therefore, I have taken the liberty to treat him with more freedom.

As he has declared that he will make no further reply to me, I imagine that this publication will close the present controversy; and I hope it will not have been without its use in promoting the cause of truth, though I am persuaded it would have answered this end still more effectually, if my proposal of a perfectly amicable discussion, and also that of bringing it to its proper termination, had been accepted.

I am now proceeding with my larger *History of the State of Opinions concerning Christ, in the primitive Times*. But to execute this work as I wish to do it, and consistently with my other engagements and pursuits, will require a consider-

able time, hardly less than two or three years. Nor will my readers wonder at this, when I inform them that I am determined to examine for myself every thing that has been written by any Christian writer for the first five or six centuries after Christ, with the single view of collecting from them whatever I can find to throw light on this particular subject. After this examination, in which I have already made considerable progress, I shall carefully attend to whatever the most respectable *modern writers* have advanced on this subject; and I shall then compose the work with all the circumspection that I am capable of, introducing into it any thing that I shall think proper from my different publications in this controversy, (which I consider as only answering a temporary purpose,) and then abandon it to the censures of my critics; and I hope there will not be wanting abler men than Dr. Horsley to discover and correct whatever imperfections may, after all, be found in it.

I will not rashly commit myself with respect to the issue of an inquiry of this extent, and that is not yet completed; but I can assure my readers, that I see the most abundant cause to be satisfied with every thing of consequence that I have advanced in this controversy; and that I am able to produce much additional evidence for every article of it, as well as a variety of other matter relating to the subject, which will throw light on the opinions and turn of thinking in early times.

Among other particulars, I shall examine, as thoroughly as I can, those *Platonic* notions concerning God, and the general system of things, which prepared the way for the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and of the Trinity; shewing how they were understood, and how far they were adopted, by the Christian writers. In the mean time, having long given a good deal of attention to the subject, I will venture to say, that from what Dr. Horsley has dropped concerning *Platonism*, as well as from the admiration he has expressed of it, he understands very little of the matter.

As I now consider this controversy as closed, it is probable that till my larger work be printed, the public will hear no more from me on this subject. But if any thing more plausible than has yet been urged should appear, I shall have an opportunity of noticing it in the *Theological Repository*, which I hope soon to open again;* and if any person will give his name, and propose any difficulty whatever

* The Introduction to the Fourth Volume is dated Nov. 1, 1784.

relating to the present discussion, so that I shall see reason to think that it proceeds from a love of truth and a desire of information, I here promise that I will speak fully to it, and I shall be as explicit as I possibly can. But to be more so than I have hitherto been is impossible. Such as I have been, the public shall always find me. I have no reserve or concealment with respect to myself, and I shall always endeavour to preserve as much candour as possible with regard to others. But if I have been addicted to the *artifices* and *deceits* that Dr. Horsley so vehemently accuses me of, and if I have actually practised them to the age of fifty, I shall hardly lay them aside now. Let the public, therefore, be upon their guard against me, and "watch very narrowly," as, he says, is "necessary."* Great changes in *character* and *habit* seldom take place at my age.

In this larger work, on which I am now employed, I find myself in a great measure upon new ground. At least, I see reason to think that it has never been sufficiently examined by any person who has had the same general views of things that I have. Dr. Lardner, who was as much conversant with the early Christian writers as perhaps any man whatever, and whose sentiments on the subject of this controversy were the same with mine, yet had another object in reading them. When I applied to him for some assistance it was too near the close of his life; and the few hints with which he did furnish me related wholly to the doctrine of *atonement*, on which he had before published a small tract of mine.

Przipcovius† wrote upon this subject; but what he has advanced is very short, and very imperfect. What *Zwicker* did I can only learn from Bishop Bull, who had not seen all his works; but I suspect that he was not master of all the evidence that may be procured from a careful reading of ancient writers, and a comparison of the several circumstances to be collected from them; and it certainly requires no small degree of patience, as well as judgment and sagacity, to trace the real state of the Unitarian Christians in early times from the writings of their enemies only; for all their own writings are either grossly interpolated, or have perished, except the *Clementines*,‡ which is a work of great curiosity, and has not yet been sufficiently considered; but a candid reader will make allowance for this great disadvan-

* *Letters*, p. 39. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 129.
† Who died in 1670, aged 78. See Toulmin's *Socinus*, pp. 439—445.
‡ See *Lardner*, II. pp. 342—363.

tage, which, as the historian of the *Unitarians*, I must labour under. Who is there that will pretend to collect from the *Roman* historians only, a complete account of the affairs of the *Carthaginians*, the maxims of their conduct, and the motives of their public transactions, especially in relation to those things with respect to which we know that they mutually accused each other?

The *Clementines* (of which the *Recognitions* is little more than another edition)* was probably written about the time of *Justin Martyr*. It is properly a *theological romance*, and a fine composition of its kind. The author was perhaps too proud of his abilities as a writer; but his work is certainly superior to any thing that is now extant of that age, the writings of *Justin Martyr* by no means excepted. It abounds with curious circumstances relating to the customs and opinions of the times; and on that account it is strongly recommended by *Cotelerius*,† the editor. He says, that "though it abounds with trifles and errors, which had their source in a half-christian philosophy and heresy, especially that of the *Ebionites*, it may be read with advantage, both on account of the elegance of the style, and the various learning that it contains, and likewise for the better understanding the doctrine of the first heretics."‡

It is remarkable, not only that the author of this work, writing in the names of *Peter* and *Clement*, makes them Unitarians, but that, in a great variety of theological discussions upon nice subjects, (in which every thing relating to the doctrine of the Gnostics, as it then stood, is minutely treated,) there is no appearance of his having so much as heard of the doctrine of the *personification of the Logos*, or of *the divinity or pre-existence of Christ*, in any other form than that of the *Gnostics*, except in some particular expressions which *Cotelerius* supposes to be the interpolations of some *Arian*. It is probable, therefore, that though some of the works of *Justin Martyr* might perhaps have been extant when this writer was employed about his, they were but little known, or his opinions might have been adopted by few persons only.

Now this writer, whose knowledge of the state of opinions

* See *Lardner*, II. pp. 355, 360.

† *Jean-Baptiste Cotelier;* who died in 1686, aged 59. His *Patres Apostolici*, which first appeared in 1672, was republished by *Le Clerc* in 1724.

‡ "Et vero quæ damus *Clementina*, licet nugis, licet erroribus scatent, à semichristiana philosophia, et hæresi, præcipue Ebionitica, profectis, non sine fructu tamen legentur, tum propter elegantiam sermonis, tum multiplicis doctrinæ causa, tum denique ad melius cognoscenda primarum Hæresion dogmata." *Preface.* (*P.*)

in his time cannot be questioned, would hardly have represented *Peter* and *Clement* as Unitarians if he had not thought them to be such. Nay, it may be inferred from the view that he has given of their principles, that, supposing the doctrine of the Trinity to have existed in his time, yet that *Peter*, *Clement*, and consequently the great body of Christians in the apostolic age, were *generally thought* to have been Unitarians, as he must have imagined that this circumstance would contribute to the credibility of his narrative. A writer who personates another will be as careful as he can to ascribe to him no opinions but such as are commonly supposed to be his; for without this the imposition, if any such was intended, could not answer his purpose. But I much question whether any serious imposition was really intended by this writer. The further consideration of this subject, however, I reserve for my larger work.

To return from this digression, I shall observe, that as to the learned Christians of the last age, (excepting the *Athanasians*,) they were almost all *Arians*, such as Dr. Whitby, Dr. Clarke, Mr. Whiston, Mr. Jackson, Mr. Pierce, &c.* In their time it was a great thing to prove that the doctrine of the perfect equality of the Son to the Father in all divine perfections, was not the doctrine of the early ages. Those writers could not indeed help perceiving traces of the doctrine of the *simple humanity of Christ;* but taking it for granted that this was an opinion concerning him as much *too low* as that of the *Athanasians* was *too high*, and there being no distinguished advocates for the proper Unitarian doctrine in their time, they did not give sufficient attention to the circumstances relating to it. These circumstances it will be my business to collect and to compare; and, situated as I am, it may be depended upon that I shall do it with all the circumspection of which I am capable.

Notwithstanding the fullness of my own persuasion, I am far from being sanguine in my expectations with respect to others, even from the strongest evidence that I can produce of the primitive Christians having been universally or very generally Unitarians. Though there do not appear to be so many learned *Arians* at present as there were thirty or forty years ago, yet I am well aware that the impression made by their writings is such, as that those persons who have now the most reputation for theological literature, (having in fact been their disciples,) are very generally of their opi-

* See Vol. VI. p. 3.

nion, as I myself formerly was; and therefore that there is at present, as might well be expected, a general prepossession against me among the more learned Christians with respect to this argument.

I am also not so ignorant of history or of human nature as not to be sensible that *time* is requisite to make any considerable change even in the opinions of the learned, though it certainly requires more time to produce an equal change in those of the unlearned; and with respect to most persons who are advanced in life, it is hardly to be expected from any force of argument. But in the last ten years a very great change has been made in the opinions of those who have given much attention to theological matters, and the number of Unitarians is greatly increased. A learned *Trinitarian* is almost a phenomenon in this country, and learned *Arians* are much fewer than they have been.* And when the *historical arguments* in favour of proper Unitarianism, which have hitherto been very much overlooked, shall be duly attended to, especially that which arises from the consideration of the great body of the common people among Christians having thought that Christ was simply *a man inspired of God*, and their having had no knowledge of his *pre-existence*, the conclusion that such a general persuasion must have been derived from the apostles having taught no other doctrine will not easily be avoided. It will also weigh much with those who are apt to lay great stress on the usual construction of some *particular texts*, to consider, that, in those early times, the Scriptures were constantly read by persons better qualified to understand the language of them than we at this time can pretend to be, without suggesting any such notions of the divinity or the pre-existence of Christ, as are now supposed to be clearly contained in them. When these, I say, and other similar arguments, shall have had time to operate, they will, I am confident, meet with less obstruction continually, and produce a still greater change in ten years to come.

As the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ came in with philosophical and speculative people, and required many centuries, and those years of gross darkness, before it laid firm hold on the minds of the common people, it will

* By a *learned Trinitarian* or *Arian* I do not mean a man who has merely classical literature any more than mathematical or philosophical knowledge; but one who, having a competent knowledge of the learned languages, has made *theology* and *ecclesiastical history* his principal study. And I much question whether this has been the case with Dr. Horsley. *(P.)*

certainly remain a long time with them; and a disposition to accommodate to these will likewise operate to quicken the zeal of many teachers of Christianity in its defence. This will, no doubt, protract the æra of reformation, towards which the enlightened friends of Christianity look forwards with confidence and joy, to a more distant period.

In the mean time, it is a great satisfaction to reflect that, whatever difficulties may lie in the way of truth, no proper effort to remove them can be without its effect. So regular are the laws of nature, respecting even the human mind, and the influences to which it is exposed, that no endeavours to instruct or reform the world can be wholly lost. Like seed thrown into the ground they may *seem* to be lost; but in due time, if the soil be good, and other circumstances favourable, (and for these things we, who scatter our seed promiscuously, must take our chance,) the harvest will in its proper season be abundant. This consideration should encourage all the labourers in the great field of mankind to *plow in hope* and to *sow in hope;* that, if not we, at least our posterity, may *become partakers of our hope.* (1 *Cor.* ix. 10.)

I can already perceive that several persons of more ingenuous dispositions among my *Arian* friends are much struck with some of the circumstances which I have brought to light, and others have had their objections completely removed; so that I am not without hope that a much greater number will think as I now do when my *larger work* shall be published, especially if a sufficient degree of attention be excited to the subject. In this view I am truly thankful for what has already been done by Dr. Horsley and the *Monthly Reviewers*, and on this account I sincerely wish that their credit and influence were more considerable and extensive than they are. This opposition, and the effect of it abroad, will contribute to make the controversy better known; and though the truth may be borne down for a time, it will be more firmly established in consequence of it in the end. It is like sinking a piece of cork, which, with the greater force it is plunged under water, with the greater force and celerity it will recover its natural place. It is with great tranquillity and satisfaction that I look forward towards this period; and I should not be qualified to appear before the public at all, if, in the mean time, I could not look upon such an opposition as I have hitherto experienced with a mixture of indifference and contempt.

When this investigation shall be completely finished, it

will probably be matter of surprise to many, that it was not sooner discovered that the Unitarians *must have been*, and certainly *were*, the great body of common Christians till after the Council of *Nice*.* It may even be said, that there was very little merit indeed in proving a thing so extremely obvious, and that many other persons had proved it quite as well before. I shall, if I live to see it, rejoice in this change of opinion, let who will have contributed to it.

In the mean time, what is all the opposition that a man can meet with, from whatever persons, and in whatever form it be carried on, when weighed against the full conviction of his own mind, arising from a fair and careful examination? And with respect to the judgment of the public, the effect of any mode of opposition is only temporary. What did the unqualified approbation of all the defenders of a pretended *common sense*, by the *Monthly Reviewers* of that day, do for the doctrine? Has it now any advocates? Those Reviewers quote, without the least suspicion of any thing amiss, even Dr. Oswald's refutation of the only satisfactory argument for the being of a God, viz. from the consideration of *cause and effect*. But what has it availed in the issue? And what signified the rancour with which they treated my defence of the true common sense against the spurious one?† Though much admired in its day, it has not been in their power to rescue it from oblivion.

Though Dr. Horsley is determined to make no reply to me, (and, indeed, unless he was better informed with respect to this subject, it is more advisable for him to leave the field to abler writers,) he is accountable to the public for misleading them, as he has done with respect to *facts* in ancient history, and for his defamation of the illustrious dead; as well as for his want of common candour, and his misrepresentations as to the living. If he be an honest man, and of an ingenuous mind, he must, in some mode or other, either refute this charge, or acknowledge the justness of it. He says, with respect to me, "A writer of whom it is once proved that he is ill-informed upon his subject, hath no right to demand a further hearing."‡ To which of us two the observation best applies, let others judge. When he has read these *Letters*, (if he should think proper to read them at all,) he will, I presume, be a little better informed than he is at present; and then I shall

* A. D. 325. See Vol. VIII. pp. 294—304.
† See *Mon. Rev.* XLVII. p. 47; LII. pp. 289—292.
‡ *Letters*, p. 6. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 90.

have no objection to his having another hearing, but I shall not think myself bound to reply.

As to the *Monthly Reviewer*, Mr. Badcock, if he should ever really study the subject of this controversy, (which it is evident enough he has not done yet,) he will find that he is mistaken with respect to every part of it; and if ever he comes to reflect upon his conduct in this business in a moral light, he will feel more than I should wish him or any man to do, except for his own good.

I shall close this Preface with reminding the reader, that he should carefully distinguish with respect to the *importance* of the different articles that are now the subject of discussion. To prevent any material mistake of this kind, I published [1783] a small pamphlet, entitled *A General View of the Arguments for the Unity of God, and against the Divinity and Pre-existence of Christ, from Reason, from the Scriptures, and from History;** that when any advantage should be gained, either by myself or my antagonists, it might be seen at once what the amount of it really was, and be estimated accordingly. To this small piece, and especially the *Maxims of Historical Criticism* † contained in it, and in my former Letters to Dr. Horsley, I wish that particular attention may be given in the course of this controversy, whether carried on by myself or others.

Large works, particularly of the historical kind, were never yet known to be free from mistakes. The subjects of my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* were so complex, and my attention was of course divided among such a variety of different articles, and the materials were collected at the distance of so many years, that I really wonder that it has escaped so well as it has done; not one mistake having been discovered in it that at all affects my general design. What are all the errors put together, compared to that gross one which I have shewn *Mosheim* and Dr. Horsley to have fallen into? And yet the credit of Mosheim's history will not be materially affected by it on the whole. It is a work that I shall not scruple to quote myself, as I may have occasion, making due allowance for the author's peculiar prejudices. The candid reader will make the same allowance for me. Time, however, will shew what the oversights have been. These will of course be corrected, and what remains will stand the firmer on that account.

Though I cannot say to Dr. Horsley as he does to me,

* See *Appendix*, No. VII. † *Ibid.* No. II.

"I should have more than a single remark to make on almost every sentence of every one of your ten Letters," * it would have been easy for me, from the materials that I have already collected, to have extended this publication to a much greater length. But I do not choose, in these temporary pieces, to forestal my larger work; though I think it may be of use to produce so much of what I have collected as may tend to excite a more general attention to the subject, and invite others to engage in the same inquiry; that when I do publish that work, I may find more readers properly prepared to judge of it than there appear to be at present. For, that there are at present those who are not thus prepared, there cannot be a clearer indication than that the writings of Mr. Badcock and Dr. Horsley have found admirers. Indeed, if I had not had the object above-mentioned, and also thought that their animadversions gave me a good opportunity of producing additional evidence for what I had advanced in my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, I should not have troubled myself with replying to their objections or abuse. If I had left all their darts sticking in my buckler, they would not have retarded my progress.

At all events, I wish the most rigorous investigation of this subject to proceed, whatever may be the consequence with respect to my opinions or myself, as I can sincerely adopt the prayer of Ajax, quoted by me in my first controversy with Dr. Brown: †

> Ποιησον δ' αιθρην, δος δ' οφθαλμοισιν ιδεσθαι·
> Εν δε φαει και ολεσσον. *Hom.* Iliad, Lib. xvii. ver. 646.
>
> Give me but day; let light the truth disclose;
> Though *me* its beams confound, and not *my foes.*

Since the whole of this Treatise was sent to the press, I have seen a posthumous piece of Dr. Lardner's, just published, entitled *Four Discourses on Philippians* ii. 1—15, ‡

* *Letters*, p. 9. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 94.

† In 1765. See "Remarks on a Code of Education," Sect iii., where Dr. Priestley exclaims, on quoting the Greek couplet, "Be the prayer of the magnanimous Ajax ever mine."

‡ See "Two Schemes of a Trinity considered, and the Divine Unity asserted;" *Lardner*, X. pp. 600—645. These *Discourses* "were delivered from the pulpit" about 1747. The editor, in 1784, was the Rev. John Wiche, of Maidstone, who died in 1794, aged 76. Mr. W. had "embraced the *Arian* hypothesis," till, "in 1760, reading Dr. Lardner's 'Letter on the Logos,' he was so impressed with the argument, as soon after to adopt the sentiment it was designed to prove." See *Ibid.* pp. 600, 601; *Prot. Dis. Mag.* IV. p. 129. The *Four Discourses* have been annexed to the "Letter on the Logos," among the Tracts of the Unitarian Society.

which I cannot omit this opportunity of most earnestly recommending to all my readers. It is written with that simplicity and modesty which distinguish all his writings; and I should think it cannot fail to make a great impression on those whose minds are at all open to conviction in favour of the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ. This he generally calls the *Nazarean*, and sometimes the *Unitarian* doctrine, as opposed both to the *Trinitarian* and the *Arian* schemes, which he particularly considers. "This," he says, "seems to be the plainest and most simple scheme of all; and it is generally allowed to have been the belief of the Nazarean Christians, or the Jewish believers."*

For the convenience of the reader, I have subjoined to this Preface a short statement of the different opinions held by Dr. Horsley and myself on the subject of this controversy;† and also an account of the time in which the principal ecclesiastical writers, and other persons whose names most frequently occur in the course of it, flourished.‡ This will also be useful to the readers of my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*.

Having, in the course of this controversy, had occasion very carefully to revise that part of the *History* which relates to the person of Christ, I can assure the reader that I see no reason to make any more than the following *corrections* and *alterations*,§ which, considering the difficulty and extent of the undertaking, will, I think, be deemed to be very inconsiderable, and upon the whole by no means unfavourable to my principal object.

* *Lardner*, X. p. 632. "But whatever," he proceeds, "may be the simplicity of this scheme, even they who have seemed to receive it, in the main, have corrupted it, and suffered themselves to be entangled in philosophical schemes and speculations, about the pre-existence of the soul of Christ, and other matters. Indeed," he adds, "the Christian religion has in it great simplicity, both as to doctrines and positive institutions. But men have not delighted to retain the simplicity of either." *Ibid.*

Dr. Lardner had before remarked, "Of those who are in this scheme it is to be observed, finally, that they admit not any real Trinity, or Trinity of Divine Persons, either equal or subordinate. But to them there is one God, even the Father, and one Lord, even Jesus Christ: who had, when on earth, the spirit without measure, and also poured out of the spirit, or spiritual and miraculous gifts in abundance upon his apostles, and others his followers, and is exalted to dominion and power over all things, to the glory of God, and for the good of the Church." *Ibid.*

† See *Appendix*, No. VIII.

‡ This *Catalogue* will appear, with the *Indices*, in the last volume.

§ These have been used in preparing Vol. V. for the press.

LETTERS

TO THE

ARCHDEACON OF ST. ALBAN'S.

LETTER I.

The Introduction.

Rev. Sir,

At length you have condescended to gratify my wishes, and have favoured me with a series of Letters in answer to mine. But as they are written with a degree of insolence which nothing in your situation or mine can justify, and indicate a temper that appears to me to be very far from being the most proper for the discussion of historical truth, I shall consider myself in this answer as writing not so much to you as to the candid part of the public, to whom our correspondence is open ; and I have no doubt but that I shall be able to satisfy all who are qualified to judge between us, that your ignorance of the subject which you have undertaken to discuss is equal to your insolence ; and therefore that there is no great reason to regret that you have formed a resolution to appear no more in this controversy. "Whatever more," you say, "you may find to say upon the subject, in me you will have no antagonist."*

I made the proposal to discuss the question of the state of opinions concerning Christ in the early ages, in a perfectly amicable, and, as I thought, the most advantageous manner, and my address to you was uniformly respectful. It has not been my fault that this proposal was not accepted. You say, "I hold it my duty to use pretty freely that high seasoning of controversy which may interest the reader's attention."† What that *high seasoning* is, is sufficiently apparent through the whole of your performance, viz. a violation of all decency, and perpetual imputations of the grossest, but of the most improbable kind. This, from respect to the public and to myself, I shall not return ; but

* *Letters*, p. 9. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 93.
† *Letters*, p. 166. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 287.

I shall certainly think myself authorized by it to treat you with a little less ceremony in the present publication, in which I shall take occasion, from your gross mistakes and misrepresentations, to throw some further light on the subject of this discussion.

The reader must have been particularly struck with the frequent boasting of your *victory*, as if the controversy had come to a regular termination, and the public had decided in your favour. "My victory," you say, "is already so complete, that I might well decline any further contest."* Again you say, "How would it have heightened the pride of my victory, could I have found a fair occasion to be the herald of my adversary's praise!"† You call me a "foiled polemic," and "a prostrate enemy."‡ What marks of prostration you may have perceived in me, I cannot tell. I do not know that I have yet laid myself at your feet, and I presume this kind of language is rather premature. It will be time enough for you to say with Entellus, *Hic cæstus artemque repono*, when the victory, of which you boast, shall be as clear as his, and shall be declared to be so by the *proper judges*. You ought also to have remembered the advice of Solomon, *Prov.* xxvii. 2: "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips."

On the contrary, I cautioned my readers§ not to conclude too hastily in my favour, but to wait till you had made your reply. You have now done it; and I hope they will do me the justice to hear me again in return, especially as this will probably be the last time that I shall trouble them in this way.

Though this controversy has not come to what I think its proper and desirable termination, I rejoice that it has proceeded thus far; and upon the whole, I derive great satisfaction from the opposition that my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* has met with, both because a more general attention has been excited to the subject, and also because, having by this means been led to attend to it more than I should otherwise have done, I have discovered a variety of *additional evidence* in support of what I had advanced, and such an abundant confirmation of the evidence before produced, as gives even myself a greater degree of confidence

* *Letters*, p. 7. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 92.
† *Letters*, p. 160. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 278.
‡ *Letters*, pp. 8, 10. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 92, 95.
§ *Preface.* (*P.*) See *supra*, pp. 45, 46.

in it than I could otherwise have had. And when my readers in general shall see, as they cannot but see, with what extreme eagerness the most insignificant oversights have been catched at and magnified, and the readiness with which I have acknowledged such oversights, notwithstanding the gross insults with which this candour has been treated, and also that every objection has brought out new evidence in my favour, it cannot but beget a persuasion that the most sharp-sighted adversary will not be able to detect any mistake of real consequence; and from this will be derived a degree of credit to my work that nothing else could have given it. Your object, you say, was to *demolish the credit of my narrative;** but I am much mistaken if, instead of that, your weak, though violent opposition has not greatly contributed to strengthen it.

You will perhaps be struck with the change in the style of my address to you, when you observe me beginning with *Rev. Sir*, instead of the *Dear Sir* of my former Letters, an appellation to which our personal acquaintance gave a propriety, and which you have returned; but when I consider how ill it corresponds to the spirit of your Letters, and the stress you lay on your *Archidiaconal dignity*, which appears not only in the title-page of your work, but at the head of many of your Letters, and which you intimate that I had not sufficiently attended to,† I thought the style of *Rev. Sir*, and occasionally that of *Mr. Archdeacon*, both more proper, and also more pleasing to yourself; and therefore I have adopted it. And if by any accident I should *wound your feelings*,‡ you will find the proper balm in my *running title*.

While persons who have some personal acquaintance treat each other with decent respect, and are uniform in doing it, as I have been to you, the usual style of *Dear Sir* is natural and proper; but when you charge me with numerous instances of the grossest artifice and imposition on the Public, you in fact *give me the lie;* and therefore ought yourself to have dropped all terms expressive of affection and regard. I renounce all particular respect for the man who has treated me in this manner; and in the outset of this second part of our correspondence I subscribe myself, merely because custom authorizes the form,

Rev. Sir, your very humble servant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

* *Letters*, p. 8. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 93.
† *Letters*, p. 158. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 275.
‡ *Letters*, p. 159. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 276.

LETTER II.

Of the Doctrine of the first Ages concerning the Person of Christ.

REV. SIR,

To shew you that I see nothing very formidable in your strongest arguments, I shall begin with what you call "a positive proof, that the divinity of our Lord was the belief of the very first Christians."* This proof is wholly derived from the Epistle of *Barnabas.*

Of *Barnabas* you say, "You allow him a place among the fathers of the apostolic age; and will you not allow that he was a believer in our Lord's divinity? I will not take upon me, Sir, to answer this question for you; but I will take upon me to say, that whoever denies it, must deny it to his own shame."† "The proof" from this writer, you say, "is so direct and full, though it lies in a narrow compass, that if this be laid in the one scale, and your whole mass of evidence from incidental and ambiguous allusions, in the other, 'the latter will fly up and kick the beam.'"‡

I am surprised, Sir, at the extreme confidence with which you tread this very precarious and uncertain ground; when, to say nothing of the doubts entertained by many learned men concerning the genuineness of this epistle, the most that is possible to be admitted is, that it is genuine *in the main.* For, whether you may have observed it or not, it is most evidently *interpolated*, and the interpolations respect the very subject of which we treat. Two passages in the *Greek*, which assert the pre-existence of Christ, are omitted in the ancient *Latin* version of it. And can it be supposed that that version was made in an age in which such an omission was likely to be made? Both the interpolations are in Sect vi., where we now read thus: λεγει γαρ ἡ γραφη περι ἡμων, ὡς λεγει τῳ υἱῳ, Ποιησωμεν κατ' εικονα και καθ' ὁμοιωσιν ἡμων τον ανθρωπον. *For the scripture says concerning us, as he says to the Son, Let us make man according to our image and our likeness.* But the ancient *Latin* version, corresponding to this passage is simply this: *Sicut dicit scriptura, Faciamus hominem*, &c., that is, *As says the scripture, Let us make man*, &c.

* *Letters*, p. 64. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 163.
† *Letters*, p. 66. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 166.
‡ *Letters*, p. 68. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 168, 169.

Again, in the same section, after quoting from *Moses*, "Increase and multiply, and replenish the earth," the Greek copy has ταυτα προς τον υἱον, *these things to the Son;* but in the old *Latin* version the clause is wholly omitted; and certainly there is no want of it, or of the similar clause in the former passage, with respect to the general object of the writer. These, Sir, appear to me pretty evident marks of interpolation.

The passage on which you lay the chief stress is only in the *Latin* version, that part of the *Greek* copy to which it corresponds being now lost; and all the other expressions that you note are such as an Unitarian will find no difficulty in accommodating to his principles.

On these accounts your evidence from this epistle of *Barnabas* will by no means bear the stress that you lay upon it. Can it be thought at all improbable, that if one person interpolated the *Greek*, another should make as free with the *Latin* version? I must, therefore, see other evidence than this from Barnabas, before I can admit that the doctrine of the divinity or pre-existence of Christ was the belief of the apostolic age.

You still argue with the same confidence from the epistle of *Clemens Romanus*. "The context," you now say, determines the coming of Christ, of which he speaks, to be from a pre-existent state, and this you call "something of great importance in its defence," as no doubt it would be if it was just: but let us examine it. The whole of the passage, with the small *context* on which you lay so much stress, is, in your own words, as follows: "'He came not,' says Clemens, 'in the pomp of pride and arrogance, although he had it in his power, but in humility, as the Holy Spirit spake concerning him.'—To determine what this humility is, Clemens immediately goes on to cite the prophecies which describe the Messiah's low condition. The humility, therefore, of an ordinary condition is that in which it is said the Messiah came. The pomp, therefore, of a high condition, is the pomp in which it is said he came not, although he had it in his power so to come. The expressions, therefore, clearly imply, that our Lord, ere he came, had the power to choose in what condition he would be born."*

But, Sir, had you considered the prophecies which *Clemens* quotes, you would have found them to be not such as describe the circumstances of his *birth*, but only those of

* *Letters*, p. 29. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 118. See *supra*, p. 54.

his *public life* and *death;* the principal of them being Isaiah liii., which he quotes almost at full length. How, then, does this *important circumstance* help your argument? It is, on the other hand, certainly favourable to mine, viz. that when Christ was in public life he made no ostentatious display of the extraordinary powers with which he was invested, and preferred a low condition to that of a great prince.

The more ancient reading that you quote of *Jerome* I also consider as evidently favourable to my interpretation of this passage. He read παντα δυναμενος, *having all power*, which naturally alludes to the great power of which Christ became possessed after the descent of the spirit of God upon him at his baptism.

As to the phrase *coming*, you must be little *at home*, as you say, in the language of the Scriptures, or have given little attention to it, not to have perceived that it is a phrase used to express *the mission of any prophet*, and that it is applied to *John the Baptist* as well as to Christ, of which the following are examples: *Matt.* xi. 18, 19: "John came neither eating nor drinking," &c.; "The Son of Man came eating and drinking," &c.; that is, not locally from heaven, but as the prophets came from God. Christ says of John, (*Matt.* xxi. 32,) "John came unto you in the way of righteousness." *John*, the evangelist, also says of him, (*John* i. 7,) "The same came for a witness," &c., so that all your descanting upon this passage of *Clemens* is impertinent.

Admitting that some one circumstance in the prophecies he quotes, rigorously interpreted, should allude to the birth of Christ, (though I see no reason to think so,) you are not authorized to conclude that *Clemens* attended to that in particular, but to the general scope of the whole, which is evidently descriptive of his public life only.

If, with your boasted knowledge of *Greek*, you had attended ever so little to the *theory of language* in general, and the natural *use of words*, you would have seen that the term *God* would not, from the beginning, have been used by way of contradistinction to *Christ*, if the former could have been predicated of the latter. We say *the prince and the king*, because the prince is not a king. If he had, we should have had recourse to some other distinction, as that of *greater* and *less*, *senior* and *junior*, *father* and *son*, &c. When, therefore, the apostle Paul said that the church at Corinth was *Christ's*, and that *Christ* was *God's*, (and that manner of distinguishing them is perpetual in the *New Testament,)* it is

evident that he could have no idea of Christ being *God*, in any proper sense of the word.

In like manner, *Clemens*, in this passage, calling *Christ* the *sceptre of the majesty of God*, sufficiently proves that, in his idea, the *sceptre* was one thing, and the God whose sceptre it was, another. This, I say, must have been the case when this language was first adopted, though, when principles are once formed, we see by a variety of experience, that any language may be accommodated to them. But an attention to this circumstance will, I doubt not, contribute, with persons of real discernment, to bring us back to the original use of the words, and to the ideas originally annexed to them. I am persuaded, that even now the constant use of these terms *Christ* and *God*, as opposed to each other, has a great effect in preventing those of the common people who read the *New Testament* more than books of controversy, from being habitually and practically *Trinitarians*. There will by this means be a much greater difference between *God* and *Christ* in their *minds* than they find in their *creeds*.

With respect to *Ignatius*, I would observe, that as you knew the genuineness of his epistles had been controverted, and by men of learning and ability, you certainly ought not from the first to have concealed that circumstance. You say, however, "I shall appeal to them with the less scruple, forasmuch as the same sincerity which I ascribe to them, and which is quite sufficient for my purpose, is allowed by the learned and the candid Dr. Lardner.—After suggesting, in no very confident language, that 'even the smaller epistles may have been tampered with by the Arians, or the Orthodox, or both,' he adds, 'I do not affirm that there are in them any considerable corruptions or alterations.' If no *considerable* corruptions or alterations, certainly none respecting a point of such importance as the original nature of Christ."*

This is curious indeed. What, then, could Dr. Lardner mean by these epistles having been *tampered with by the Arians, the Orthodox, or both?*† If *they* interpolated them at all, it would certainly be to introduce into them passages favourable to their opinions concerning the divinity or pre-existence of Christ. How would it be worth their while, *as Arians or Orthodox*, to interpolate them for any other purpose? If a farmer, hearing of some depredation on his

* *Letters*, p. 34. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 124. See *supra*, pp. 54, 55.
† See *supra*, p. 28.

property, committed by foxes, should say, My *corn* may have been plundered, but as the mischief has been done by *foxes*, my *geese* and my *poultry* are safe; what would be said of his reasoning? Yet of the same nature is yours in this case.

These foxes have not refrained from their prey in more sacred inclosures than those of *Ignatius*. Sir Isaac Newton, among others, has clearly proved that the orthodox, as they are commonly called, have, in this way, *tampered* with the *New Testament* itself; having made interpolations favourable to the doctrine of the Trinity, especially the famous passage concerning the *three that bear record in heaven*, in the first epistle of John.* This I should imagine you yourself will acknowledge;† and can you think they would spare the epistles of *Ignatius*, which were much more in their power?

Jortin says, "Though the shorter epistles are on many accounts preferable to the larger, yet I will not affirm that they have undergone no alteration at all."‡

For my own part, I scruple not to say, that there never were more evident marks of interpolation in any writings than are to be found in these *genuine epistles*, as they are called, of Ignatius; though I am willing to allow, on re-considering them, that, exclusive of manifest interpolation, there may be a ground-work of antiquity in them. The famous passage in *Josephus*, concerning Christ,§ is not a more evident interpolation than many in these epistles of *Ignatius*, which you quote with so much confidence.

You yourself may believe that every word now found in these epistles was actually written by *Ignatius;* but if they have been *tampered with*, or have undergone *alterations*, how can you quote them with so much confidence, as if the argument must necessarily have the same weight with all persons? Nowithstanding this, you say, "I will, therefore, still appeal to these epistles as sufficiently sincere to be decisive upon the point in dispute. Nor shall I think myself

* See Vol. IV. p. 316, *Note.*

† So far from making such an acknowledgment concerning the passage, Dr. Horsley adduces in his *Remarks*, as an "argument of its authenticity, that the omission of it breaks the connexion, and wonderfully heightens the obscurity of the apostle's discourse." He adds, "that even the external evidence of the authenticity of the passage is far less defective than Newton and others have imagined, will be denied, I believe, by few who have impartially considered the very able vindication of this celebrated text, which hath lately been given by Mr. Travis, in his Letters to Mr. Gibbon." *Tracts*, pp. 346, 347. See Vol. IV. p. 316; XIV. pp. 433, 444, *Note.*

‡ "Remarks on Ecclesiastical History," 1751, I. p. 361. *(P.)*

§ See Vol. IV. p. 488.

obliged to go into the proof of their authenticity, till you have given a satisfactory reply to every part of Bishop Pearson's elaborate defence, a work which I suspect you have not yet *looked through*."* And I, Sir, shall save myself that trouble till you shall have replied to every part of *Larroque's*† answer to this work of *Pearson*;‡ a work which I suspect you have not *looked into*. I will, however, favour you with a sight of it, if you will gratify me with the perusal of the works of *Zwicker*, which, by your account, you have carefully read, though I have not yet been able to procure them.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

Of the Nazarenes and Ebionites.

REV. SIR,

YOU still insist upon "the high orthodoxy" of those whom the Christian fathers call "the proper Nazarenes."§ "Epiphanius," you say, "confesses that the Nazarenes held the Catholic doctrine concerning the nature of our Lord;"‖ whereas, I have maintained that though, according to him, and some other ancient writers, there was *some* difference between them and the *Ebionites*, they still agreed in asserting the proper humanity of Christ. The γνωμη which distinguished the *Ebionites*, you say, was something that they had borrowed, not from the Ναζωραιοι, the Christian *Nazarenes*, but the *Nasareans*, a sect of Jews only.¶ "I still abide by my assertion," you say, "that the name of *Nazarene* was never heard of *in the church*, that is, among Christians themselves,—before the final destruction of Jerusalem by Adrian; when it became the specific name of the Judaizers, who, at that time, separated from the church of Jerusalem and settled in the north of Galilee. The name was taken from the country in which they settled."**

I am really astonished that you should have the assurance to assert all this, so directly contrary to every thing that appears on the face of ecclesiastical history, and which must

* *Letters*, p. 34. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 124, 125.

† *Matthew de Larroque*, a learned Calvinist, who preached at *Charenton*, and afterwards at *Rouen*, where he died in 1684, aged 65.

‡ Entitled "Vindiciæ Epist. S. Ignatii contra Dallæum," 4to. *Cantab.* 1672.

§ *Letters*, p. 38. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 129.

‖ *Letters*, p. 38. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 144.

¶ *Letters*, p. 41. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 132.

** *Letters*, p. 76. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 162, 163.

have been borrowed from your imagination only, as I shall easily prove. I cannot raise *Epiphanius* himself from the dead to solve the question concerning *his opinion*, nor do I wish to disturb the good father's repose; but, though dead, he speaks sufficiently plain for my purpose in the following passage:

"Wherefore the blessed *John* coming, and finding men employed about the humanity of Christ, and the *Ebionites* being in an error about the earthly genealogy of Christ, deduced from *Abraham*, carried by *Luke* as high as *Adam*, and finding the *Cerinthians* and *Merinthians* maintaining that he was a mere man, born by natural generation of both the sexes, and also the *Nazarenes*, and many other heresies; as coming last, (for he was the fourth to write a gospel,) began as it were to call back the wanderers, and those who were employed about the humanity of Christ; and seeing some of them going into rough paths, leaving the strait and true path, cries, Whither are you going, whither are you walking, who tread a rough and dangerous path, leading to a precipice? It is not so. The God, the *Logos*, which was begotten by the Father from all eternity, is not from *Mary* only. He is not from the time of *Joseph*, he is not from the time of *Salathiel*, and *Zorobabel*, and *David*, and *Abraham*, and *Jacob*, and *Noah*, and *Adam;* but in the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with God, and the *Logos* was God. The *was*, and the *was*, and the *was*, do not admit of his having ever not been."*

Perhaps you will say that this testimony of *Epiphanius* is "forged" by me, as you charge me with respect to the same writer.† I therefore beg, that you would examine the passage yourself. You will find my reference to it sufficiently exact.

After reading this passage, can any person entertain a

* Διο και ὁ Ιωαννης ελθων ὁ μακαριος, και ευρων της ανθρωπης ησχολημενης περι την κατω Χριςε παρεσιαν, και των Εβιωναιων πλανηθεντων δια την ενσαρχον Χριςε γενεαλογιαν, απο Αβρααμ καταγομενην, και Λουκα αναγομενην αχρι τε Αδαμ· ευρων δε τες Κηρινθιανες και Μηρινθιανες εκ παρατριβης αυτον λεγοντας ειναι ψιλον ανθρωπον, και τες Ναζωραιες, και αλλας πολλας αιρεσεις, ὡς κατοπιν ελθων, τεταρτος γαρ ὑτος ευαγγελιζεται, αρχεται ανακαλεισθαι, ὡς ειπειν, τες πλανηθεντας, και ησχολημενης περι την κατω Χριςε παρεσιαν, και λεγειν αυτοις (ὡς κατοπιν βαινων, και ὁρων τινας εις τραχειας ὁδες κεκλικοτας και αφιεντας την ευθειαν και αληθινην, ὡς ειπειν) Ποι φερεσθε, ποι βαδιζετε, οἱ την τραχειαν ὁδον και σκανδαλωδη και εις χασμα φερουσαν βαδιζοντες; ανακαμψατε. Ουκ εςιν ὑτως, ουκ εςιν απο Μαριας μονον ὁ Θεος λογος, ὁ εκ πατρος αναθεν γεγεννημενος, ουκ εςιν απο των χρονων Ιωσηφ, τε ταυτης ὁμαιτε, ουκ εςιν απο των χρονων Σαλαθιηλ, και Ζοροβαβηλ, και Δαβιδ, και Αβρααμ, και Ιακωβ, και Νωε, και Αδαμ, αλλα εν αρχη ην ὁ λογος, και ὁ λογος ην προς τον Θεον, και Θεος ην ὁ λογος· το δε ην, και ην, και ην, ουκ ὑποδεχεται τε μη ειναι ποτε. *Hær.* lxix. Sect. xxiii. *Epiphanii Opera*, I. ed. *Paris*, 1622, pp. 746, 747. *(P.)*

† *Letters*, p. 13. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 99.

doubt, but that, in the opinion of *Epiphanius* at least, (and weak as he was in some things, he stands uncontradicted *in this* by any authority whatever, and his account is confirmed by the most respectable ones in all antiquity,) the *Nazarenes* were not only a sect of *Jewish* Christians in the time of the apostles, but, together with the *Ebionites*, a very formidable sect, and that this sect held the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ? Did he not, as appears by this passage, consider the *Nazarenes* as standing in need of being taught the pre-existence and divinity of Christ, as well as the *Ebionites*, and the other sects that he here mentions or alludes to?

In another place this writer compares the *Nazarenes* to persons who, seeing a fire at a distance, and not understanding the cause or the use of it, run towards it and burn themselves; so "these Jews, he says, on hearing the name of Jesus only, and the miracles performed by the apostles, believe on him; and knowing that he was born at *Nazareth*, and brought up in the house of *Joseph*, and that on that account he was called a *Nazarene*, (the apostles styling him *a man of Nazareth, approved by miracles and mighty deeds,)* imposed that name upon themselves."* How, Sir, does this agree with this writer's supposing that the Nazarenes, of whom he was treating, were well instructed in the doctrine of the divinity of Christ? Also, how does this agree with the late origin that you give to these Nazarenes?

You, Mr. Archdeacon, are pleased to deny the existence even of the *Ebionites* in the time of the apostles, contrary, I will venture to say, to the unanimous testimony of all antiquity. *Jerome*, giving an account of the reasons that moved *John* to write his gospel, mentions the *Ebionites* not only as a sect, but a flourishing sect in the time of that apostle. See the following passage from his catalogue of ecclesiastical writers: "*John*, the apostle whom Jesus [especially] loved, the son of *Zebedee*, and brother of *James*, [the apostle,] who was beheaded by *Herod* after the death of Christ, wrote his gospel, the last of all, (at the entreaty of the bishops of Asia,) against *Cerinthus* and other heretics, and especially the doctrine of the *Ebionites*, then gaining ground, who said that

* Ακουσαντες γαρ μονον ονομα Ιησυ, και θεασαμενοι τα θεοσημεια τα δια χειρων των αποστολων γινομενα, και αυτοι εις Ιησουν πιστευσι· γνοντες δε αυτον εκ Ναζαρετ εν γαστρι εγκυμονηθεντα, και εν οικῳ Ιωσηφ ανατραφεντα, και δια τουτο εν τῳ ευαγγελιῳ Ιησουν τον Ναζωραιον καλεισθαι, ὡς και οἱ αποστολοι φασιν Ιησουν τον Ναζωραιον ανδρα, αποδεδειγμενον εν τε σημειοις και τερασι και τα ἑξης· τουτο το ονομα επιτιθεασιν αυτοις, το καλεισθαι Ναζωραιους. *Hær.* xxix. Sect. v. *Opera*, I. p. 121. (*P.*)

Christ had no being before he was born of Mary, whence he was compelled to declare his divine origin."*—This is only one out of many authorities that I could produce for this purpose, and it is not possible to produce any to the contrary.

" As a certain proof," you say, that the Ebionites and Nazarenes " were two distinct sects," *Mosheim* " observes, that each had its own gospel."† But in answer to this opinion of Mosheim's, I shall give you another, which I think of equal authority, viz. that of Mr. Jeremiah Jones, with whom I find I have had the happiness to bring you acquainted;‡ and I can introduce him with the greater confidence of his being well received, as he was as orthodox as yourself. As he is a writer entirely new to you, I shall give his whole paragraph on the subject.

" It is plain there was a very great agreement between these two ancient sects; and though they went under different names, yet they seem only to have differed in this, that the Ebionites had made some addition to the old Nazarene system. For Origen expressly tells us, Και Εβιωναιοι χρηματιζουσι οι απο Ιουδαιων τον Ιησουν ως Χριστον παραδεξαμενοι. *They were called Ebionites who from among the Jews own Jesus to be the Christ.* And though Epiphanius seems to make their gospels different, calling one πληρεστατον, *most entire*, yet this need not move us. For if the learned Casaubon's conjecture should not be right, that we should read the same, viz. ου πληρεστατον in both places, (which yet is very probable for any thing Father Simon has proved to the contrary,) yet will the difficulty be all removed at once by this single consideration, that Epiphanius never saw any gospel of the Nazarenes; for though he calls it πληρεστατον, yet he himself says, ουκ οιδα δε ει και τας γενεαλογιας περιειλον, that he did not know whether they had taken away the genealogy, as the Ebionites had done; i. e. having never seen the Nazarene gospel, for aught he knew it might be the very same with that of the Ebionites, as indeed it most certainly was."§

As I have perceived that the opinion of the moderns has

* " Joannes, Apostolus quem Jesus amavit plurimum, filius Zebedæi, frater Jacobi Apostoli, quem Herodes post passionem domini decollavit, novissimus omnium scripsit evangelium, rogatus ab Asiæ episcopis, adversus Cerinthum, aliosque hæreticos, et maxime tunc Ebionitarum dogma consurgens, qui asserunt Christum ante Mariam non fuisse, unde et compulsus est divinam ejus naturam edicere." *Opera*, I. p. 273. (*P.*)

† *Letters*, p. 27. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 128.

‡ *Supra*, p. 60. See *Tracts*, p. 127.

§ *Jones on the Canon*, I. p. 386. (*P.*)

sometimes great weight with you, I shall transcribe part of a note of the learned translator of *Mosheim*, on this subject. "This gospel," he says, "which was called indiscriminately the gospel of the Nazarenes or Hebrews, is certainly the same with the gospel of the Ebionites, the gospel of the xii. apostles," &c., and, after referring to other authors, he says, "the reader will, however, find a still more accurate and satisfactory account of this gospel, in the first volume of the learned and judicious Mr. Jones's incomparable *method of settling the canonical authority of the New Testament.*"*

But in my opinion *Jerome* has sufficiently decided this question against you. Could he have had any other idea than that these two sects, (if they were properly two) used the same gospel, when he said, "in the gospel used by the *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites* which is commonly called the authentic gospel of *Matthew*, which I lately translated from *Hebrew* into *Greek*," &c.†

You further say, "The Ebionites acknowledged no part of the Old Testament but the Pentateuch, nor the whole of that;" and therefore that Hegesippus' citing "the Proverbs of Solomon by a title which implied his acknowledgment of the book," is a proof "that he was not an Ebionite."‡ I know of no sufficient evidence that the *Ebionites* did not acknowledge the authority of all that we call the canonical books of the *Old Testament*. *Symmachus*, whose translation of the Scriptures into *Greek* is so often quoted, and with the greatest approbation, by the fathers, was an *Ebionite*, and *Jerome* says the same of *Theodotion*. They both translated the other books of the *Old Testament* as well as the *Pentateuch*, and, as far as appears, without making any distinction between that and the other books; and can this be thought probable, if they had not considered them as entitled to equal credit? Besides, our Saviour's acknowlegdment of the authority of the whole of the *Old Testament* is so express, that I cannot readily believe that any Christians, *Jews* especially, acknowledging his authority, would reject what he admitted.

What you say can be only on the authority of *Epiphanius*, and that you ought to have known is in effect contradicted

* *Eccles. Hist.* I. p. 173. (*P.*) *Cent.* ii. Pt. ii. Ch. v., *Note* f.

† "In Evangelio quo utuntur Nazareni et Ebionitæ, quod nuper in Græcum de Hebræo sermone transtulimus, et quod vocatur plerisque Matthæi authenticum, &c. In *Matt.* xii. 13." *Opera*, VI. p. 21. (*P.*)

‡ *Letters*, p. 71. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 171.

by *Irenæus*, who says that the *Ebionites* "expounded the prophecies too curiously." *Quæ autem sunt prophetica curiosius exponere nituntur.** *Grabe* says that *Ebion* wrote an exposition of the prophets, as he collected from some fragments of the work, of which he gives some account in his note on the place. By *Ebion* we may understand some *Ebionite;* for I much doubt the existence of such a person as *Ebion*, the Ebionites being mentioned long before the name Ebion occurs in ecclesiastical writers.

It is an argument in favour of the identity of the *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites*, that the former are not mentioned *by name* by any writer who likewise speaks of the Ebionites before *Epiphanius*, though the people so called afterwards, were certainly known before his time. The term *Ebionites* occurs in *Irenæus*, *Tertullian*, *Origen* and *Eusebius;* but none of them make any mention of *Nazarenes;* and yet it cannot be denied that they must have been even more considerable in the time of these writers than they were afterwards; for, together with the Ebionites, (if there was any difference between them,) they dwindled away till, in the time of *Austin*, they were *admodum pauci*, very few.

Origen must have meant to include those who were called *Nazarenes* under the appellation of *Ebionites*, because he speaks of the Ebionites as being the whole body of Jewish Christians; and the Nazarenes were Christian Jews as well as they. *Jerome* seems to use the two terms promiscuously; and in the passage of his letter to *Austin*, so often quoted in this controversy, I cannot help thinking he makes them to be the same.

The conduct of these writers is easily accounted for, on the supposition of the *Jewish* Christians having been first known to the *Gentiles* by the name of *Ebionites* only, before the appellation of *Nazarenes*, (by which they had been distinguished by their unbelieving brethren,) came to be generally known abroad. It must be more particularly difficult, on your principles, to account for the conduct of *Eusebius*, whose business, as an historian, it certainly was, to have noticed the *Nazarenes* if they had been different from the *Ebionites* whom he has mentioned; and even you allow them to have had their rise in the time of *Adrian*, whose expedition against the Jews he particularly mentions.

On this subject of the *Ebionites* I must take some notice of what you say in defence of *Eusebius*, who says that

* *Iren.* L. i. C. xxvi. (*P.*)

Theodotus was the first who taught the doctrine of the humanity of Christ. You still maintain, without the least shadow of authority for it, that he carried the doctrine further than the Ebionites had ever done; whereas, you cannot possibly produce any evidence whatever of Theodotus having been considered by the ancients in a worse light than the Ebionites.

"It is very certain," you say, "that Theodotus maintained the meer humanity of Christ in the grossest sense; in that gross and shocking sense in which it is at this day taught by yourself and Mr. Lindsey. It is not certain that the Ebionites before Theodotus had gone further than to deny our Lord's original divinity. They probably, like Socinus, admitted some unintelligible exaltation of his nature after his resurrection, which rendered him the object of worship."* You also say, "I deny that the Unitarian doctrine existed in that time" (the age of the apostles) "in the most obnoxious form. Produce your indisputable evidence. Observe, that by the most obnoxious form I understand that form which excludes the worship of Christ."†

By *the most obnoxious form* I meant the belief that Jesus was the son of *Joseph* as well as of *Mary*. That such persons existed in the age of the apostles, no person, I believe, except yourself, ever denied; and there is no reason whatever to believe that these *Ebionites*, or any Ebionites, ever considered Christ as a proper object of worship. Your idea of their entertaining the notion of an *unintelligible exaltation of his mere human nature after his resurrection*, is the most improbable of all suppositions. According to all the accounts we have of the Ebionites, they were not apt to admit things *unintelligible*.

The case of *Socinus* is very different from that of the *Ebionites*. He had been educated in the habit of praying to Christ, and therefore might not be able to reject the practice; but the Ebionites began with considering Jesus as a *mere man*, and therefore would no more think of paying worship to him than they had done to Moses, without very express instructions and directions, which it is not in your power to produce with respect either to them, or to Christians in general.

Your notion that the *Nazarenes* were the orthodox Jews who separated from the church of Jerusalem in the time of *Adrian*, and settled in the north of Galilee,‡ and that they

* *Letters*, p. 131. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 241.
† *Letters*, p. 87. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 190.
‡ *Ibid.* pp. 157, 158.

had their name from the place where they then settled, viz. *Nazareth*, will, I doubt not, be quite new to every reader of ecclesiastical history, and (excepting the first of these particulars, which I suppose you learned of *Mosheim*, who neither quotes, nor, I will venture to say, could quote any authority for it,*) an invention of your own. The *Nazarenes*, in the time of the apostles, are well known to have had their name from *Nazareth*, where Jesus had lived, and from which he had been usually called *Jesus of Nazareth;* but as to the *Nazarenes* of the Christian fathers, there is no evidence whatever of their having ever settled at *Nazareth*, or in any part of *Galilee*. *Jerome* places the Nazarenes with whom he was acquainted, (and he was well acquainted with the Nazarenes,) in *Peræa*, in *Syria*.†

You say that the Nazarenes were unknown as a sect before the destruction of Jerusalem by *Adrian;*‡ but *Epiphanius*, in perfect agreement with all the ancients, places their rise after the destruction of Jerusalem by *Titus*. After mentioning the places where they resided, viz. *Peræa*, *Cœle-Syria*, *Pella* and *Cocabe*, (observe, he says nothing of any of them being in *Nazareth*, from which you suppose they had their name,) he says, "There was their origin after the destruction of Jerusalem, when all the disciples lived at *Pella;* Christ having warned them to leave Jerusalem, and retire at the approach of the siege; and on this account they lived, as I said, in *Peræa*. Thence the sect of the *Nazarenes* had its origin."§

As to the passage in *Jerome*, from which I, after *Suicer*, inferred that the Ebionites and the Nazarenes were the same people, or only differed in some things of little moment, (but which you and Mr. Badcock think is a *demonstration* that they were fundamentally different,)‖ I see no reason to be dissatisfied with my interpretation of it. You think it is a proof of my ignorance of *Latin;* whereas, if I thought myself at liberty to do it, I could produce in my favour as high a classical authority as any that this country can furnish.

* Dr. Horsley refers, (*Tracts*, p. 158,) to "De Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum, Sæc. ii. Sect. xxxviii., *Note*," where *Mosheim* refers to "Sulpitius Severus, *Histor. Sacr.* L. ii. C. xxxi. p. 245." See *Vidal's* translation of Mosheim's *Commentaries*, 1813, II. p. 194.

† "Catalogus Virorum Illustrium, in *Matt.*" *Opera*, I. p. 267. (*P.*)

‡ *Tracts*, p. 146.

§ Εκειθεν γαρ ἡ αρχη γεγονε μετα την απο των Ἱεροσολυμων μεταϛασιν, παντων των μαθητων των εν Πελλῃ φηκοτων, Χριϛου φησαντος καταλειψαι τα Ἱεροσολυμα, και αναχωρησαι επειδη ημελλε πασχειν πολιορκιαν· και εκ της τοιαυτης ὑποθεσεως την Περαιαν οικησαντες, εκεισε, ὡς εφην, διετριβον· εντευθεν ἡ κατα τους Ναζωραιους αἱρεσις εσχε την αρχην. *Hær.* xxix. Sect. vii. *Opera*, I. p. 123. (*P.*)

‖ See *supra*, pp. 10, 37, *Note* ‡.

How could *Jerome* call these highly orthodox Jews, as you suppose them to be, *not Christians*, merely because they used the ceremonies of the law of Moses? He might have pitied them for their weakness, but he would hardly have condemned them as *no Christians*.

Your own representation of them is not very unfavourable. You say, "The Christian Nazarenes had nothing in their conduct that might render them deserving of this epithet (ανομοι, *lawless*). Their error was, that they feared to use their liberty, not that they abused it." * You therefore must think his censure very harsh and ill-applied.

I think it probable that the *Nazarenes* or *Ebionites* were considered as in a state of excommunication, not merely because they themselves observed the law of *Moses*, but because many of them would impose the same on the *Gentiles*, so that in fact they excommunicated themselves; and thus the passage in *Jerome* will be explained by one in *Justin*, (who says that he could communicate with those Jews who kept to the law of Moses, but not with those who would impose it on all Christians,) which I shall have occasion to quote hereafter.

As to Mr. Badcock's inference from the passage in *Austin's* letter, in answer to *Jerome*, I see no force in it at all. He only enumerates all the names that Jerome had mentioned; and whether these differences were real or nominal, great or little, it signified nothing to him. He himself, in his catalogue of heresies, makes a difference between the *Ebionites* and *Nazarenes*, but by no means that which you and Mr. Badcock make; and as it was a common opinion, especially in the *West*, that there was some difference between them, (though the writers who speak of it could never be certain in what it consisted,) it was very natural in Austin to mention them separately, whether Jerome had made them the same or not.

That *Austin*, in his answer to *Jerome*, did not consider the *Nazarenes* in any very favourable light, is evident from his speaking of them as *heretics*. "Quid putaverint hæretici, qui dum volunt et Judæi esse et Christiani, nec Judæi esse nec Christiani esse potuerunt," &c.,† that is, "As to the opinion of those heretics, who, while they would be both Jews and Christians, can neither be Jews nor Christians," &c. It is in these very words that Jerome had characterized those whom he had called *Nazarenes*. What more

* *Letters*, p. 49. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 140. † *Opera*, II. p. 75. *(P.)*

could *Austin* have said of the *Ebionites?* And can it be supposed that he would have spoken of the *Nazarenes* in this manner, if he had thought them *highly orthodox* with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity? especially considering that it was an age in which the greatest account was made of that doctrine; so that soundness in that article might be supposed to have atoned for defects in other things.

You say you are not singular, as I had supposed, in asserting the strict orthodoxy of the Nazarenes in opposition to the Ebionites; but you are more nearly so than you imagine. "Hugo Grotius," you say, "Vossius, Spencer, and Huetius agree that the Nazarenes and Ebionites, though sometimes confounded, were distinct sects, and they maintain the opinion, which I now maintain, of the high orthodoxy of the proper Nazarenes in the article of our Lord's divinity."*

Having examined the most respectable of these authorities, viz. *Grotius*, I find him entirely failing you, and saying no such thing as you ascribe to him. What he says is as follows: "Certe Nazaræi illi Beræenses genuina erant propago eorum qui primi ex Palestina Christi fidem erant amplexi. Nam id illis nomen primitus fuisse inditum ex Domini nostri nomine, qui vulgo Nazarenus vocabatur, apparet ex *Act.* xxiv. 5."† That is, "Those *Beræan Nazarenes* were the genuine descendants of those who first in *Palestine* embraced the Christian faith; for that this name was originally given them from the name of our Saviour, who was commonly called *the Nazarene*, appears from *Acts* xxiv. 5."‡

This, Sir, is nothing more than I have repeatedly said myself, viz. that the *Nazarenes* mentioned by the primitive fathers were the genuine descendants of the *Nazarenes*, in the time of *Paul*. *Grotius* says nothing definite about their opinions;§ but if his meaning must be interpreted by his own opinion on the subject, it would, I presume, be in my favour; for it is allowed, I believe, on all hands, that his

* *Letters*, p. 38. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 128, 129.

† *Opera*, II. p. 4. (*P.*)

‡ "Dr. Horsley, in *Reply*, Part i. p. 8, [*Tracts*, pp. 336, 337,] is extremely offended at this remark of Dr. Priestley, which indeed was incorrect; and is retracted by Dr. Priestley himself in his last Appendix to these Letters. It appears in fact that *Grotius* made a wide distinction between the *Nazarenes* and the *Ebionites;* the former, as he conceived, believing the miraculous conception and the deity of Christ; the latter denying his miraculous birth, and regarding him as a mere man. How far Grotius was right in this distinction is another question." Mr. Belsham's *Note*.

§ A passage has been pointed out to me in *Grotius*, (*Opera*, II. p. 5,) in which

Commentary on the *New Testament* is very much *Socinian*, certainly not *Athanasian*. But admitting that you may have more modern authorities for the orthodoxy of the *Nazarenes* than I had imagined, (though I believe that a great majority are with me on this subject,) the only authorities that are of any weight are the ancients, and we are now upon ground that appears to me not to have been sufficiently examined by any of the moderns.

Rather than tax me with ignorance of the sentiments of modern critics on this subject, (which you are sometimes ready enough to do,) you suppose that I was acquainted with them, and had recourse to *artifice*. "Your attempt," you say, "to set it forth in that light I cannot but consider as a stratagem, which you were willing to employ for the preservation of your battered citadel, the argument from the Nazarenes. In this stratagem, if I mistake not, you are completely foiled. In your sallies against the batteries which I have raised, I trust you will be little more successful. But as too much of stratagem is apt to mix itself with all your operations, it will be necessary that I watch very narrowly the manner of your approaches." *

This argument, however, is not so much *battered* but that it will well hold out against all your efforts to overturn it. The *Nazarenes*, as well as the *Ebionites*, the genuine descendants of the old *Jewish* Christians, and who cannot be proved to have departed from the faith of their ancestors, were all believers in the simple humanity of Christ; and certainly the presumption is, that they learned this doctrine from the apostles. For who else were their teachers?

At the close of this subject, having, as you think, a mani-

he speaks of the *Nazarenes* as "holding the common faith of other Christians with respect to Christ, which the *Ebionites* did not." But as the opinion of the *Ebionites*, of which he is there speaking, was, that Christ was the son of Joseph, all that can be inferred from the passage is, that, in his opinion, the Nazarenes differed from the Ebionites, by believing the doctrine of the miraculous conception. By the *common faith of Christians* in that early age, (supposing him to have had a view to the doctrine concerning Christ more extensively considered,) *Grotius*, no doubt, meant his own opinion, which was far from that *high orthodoxy* which Dr. Horsley ascribes to the Nazarenes.

Grotius also says that "it is well observed by *Sulpitius Severus*, that all the Jewish Christians till the time of *Adrian* held that Christ was God, though they observed the law of Moses," in the passage which I have quoted from him. But the sense in which *Grotius* understood the term *God* in this place must be explained by his own sentiments concerning Christ. As to *Sulpitius* himself, he must be considered as having said nothing more than that "almost all the Jews at Jerusalem were Christians, though they observed the law of Moses." This writer's mere assertion, that the Jewish Christians held Christ to be God, in the proper sense of the word, unsupported by any reasons for it, is even less to be regarded than that of *Eusebius*. (*P.*) *Appendix* to *Letters*, Pt. ii. 1784.

* *Letters*, p. 38. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 129.

fest advantage over me, in answer to my saying that, if the Jewish Christians were universally *Ebionites* in the time of *Origen*, the probability is that they were very generally so in the time of the apostles; you say, "Whence should this probability arise? From this general maxim it seems that 'whole bodies of men do not soon change their opinions.'* You are indeed, Sir, the very last person who might have been expected to form conclusions upon an historical question from mere theory, in defiance of the experience of mankind; in defiance of the experience of our own country and our own times. How long is it since the whole body of Dissenters in this kingdom, (the single sect of the Quakers excepted,) took their standard of orthodoxy from the opinions of Calvin? Where shall we now find a Dissenter, except perhaps among the dregs of Methodism, who would not think it an affront to be taken for a Calvinist?"†

Indeed, Sir, you are peculiarly unfortunate with respect to this example, and ought to have been better informed before you had delivered your opinion of a matter of fact, in the present state of things, and at home, with so much confidence. The fact you appeal to is notoriously the very reverse of what you represent it to be, and is one among many strong proofs of the truth of my general maxim.

It is so far from being true, that there are few *Dissenters* who would not think it an affront to be taken for *Calvinists*, that the greatest body of them would be exceedingly offended if they were called by any other name. This is notorious. Your "learned, good and able ally" Mr. Badcock, of whom you boast so much,‡ has served two congregations of Dissenters, both professedly *Calvinistical*, and in the highest degree. He himself ranks with that class; having now, as I am informed, no communion or connexion with those who are usually called *rational Dissenters*. I appeal to himself and his present congregation at South Molton, as well as his former at Barnstable, for the truth of the fact.

We *Dissenters* are much better situated than you are for judging of the truth of my general maxim, viz. that large bodies of men do not soon change their opinions. Notwithstanding the Dissenters have no legal bonds, but are perfectly free to adopt whatever opinions they please, yet, as they were universally *Calvinists* at the time of the *Refor-*

* See *supra*, p. 59. † *Letters*, p. 62. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 160.
‡ *Letters*, pp. 77, 78. *(P.)* *Tracts*, pp. 178, 180, 223, 246.

mation, they are very generally so still. The ministers, as might be expected, are the most enlightened, and have introduced some reformation among the common people; but a majority of the ministers are, I believe, still Calvinists.

I should have thought that no person at all acquainted with history could have entertained a doubt with respect to the general maxim that you refer to, viz. that great bodies of men do not soon change their opinions. Did it not appear when our Saviour and the apostles preached the gospel with all the advantage of miracles; and did it not appear in the christianizing of the *Gentile* world? I need not inform you how long the ignorant country people in particular continued *Pagans*, a word borrowed from their being chiefly the inhabitants of villages. Does not the history both of the corruption and of the reformation of Christianity prove the same thing? How many yet believe the doctrine of *Transubstantiation?* And, what I think as much a case in point, how many yet believe the doctrine of the *Trinity!* Had it not been for the force of this maxim, we should not have found an Archdeacon of St. Alban's employing the moderate share of learning that he is possessed of in the defence of a tenet so palpably absurd.

You seem, Sir, to speak with contempt of the doctrines of *Calvin*. I must, however, remind you, that the doctrinal articles of your church are *Calvinistic*.* If you, therefore, be a true member of the Church of England, believing *ex animo*, and in their plain obvious sense, all the thirty-nine articles, you yourself believe the doctrines of original sin, predestination, and every other tenet that is generally known by the name of *Calvinistic*. I do not tax you, as you repeatedly do me, with *insincerity*. I presume you really *do* believe the doctrines that are termed Calvinistic, and, therefore, I think you ought to have treated them with more respect. You ought also to have spoken with more respect of the *Methodists*. They, as well as you, are professed members of the Church of England, and not Dissenters.

I am, &c.

* *Burnet* acknowledges that "it is not to be denied but that the Article (xvii.) seems to be framed according to St. *Austin's* doctrine." Speaking of the *Remonstrants* he says, "On the other hand, the *Calvinists* have less occasion for scruple, since the article does seem more plainly to favour them.—Yet," on "the *Remonstrant* side," he alleges, "that the universal extent of the death of Christ seems to be very plainly affirmed in the most solemn part of all the offices of the church," especially "in the Office of Communion," and in the "Church-Catechism." *Expos.* 1720, pp. 165, 166. See "The Re-establishment of the Church of England by Queen Elizabeth," in *Toplady's* "*Historic Proof* of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England," 1774, II. pp. 467—577.

LETTER IV.

Of the supposed Orthodox Jewish Church at Jerusalem, and of the Veracity of Origen.

REV. SIR,

YOU speak of a church of *Trinitarian Jews*, who had abandoned the law of *Moses*, and resided at Jerusalem, subsequent to the time of *Adrian.** *Origen*, who asserts that all the Jewish Christians of his time conformed to the law of Moses, you say, must have known of this church, and therefore you do not hesitate, after *Mosheim*, to tax him with asserting a wilful falsehood. Error was often ascribed to this great man by the later fathers, but never before, I believe, was his *veracity* called in question ; and least of all can it be supposed that he would have dared to assert a notorious untruth in a public controversy. He must have been a fool, as well as the knave you make him, to have ventured upon it. Your treatment of myself, however, gives me the less pain, when I see you not scrupling to fix a similar odium on the character of the respectable *Origen*. But what, Sir, would you not have said of me, if I had been reduced to this dilemma in order to maintain my opinion ? What an outcry did not you and Mr. Badcock make, when I disputed the evidence of *Eusebius*, though I could confute him from himself!† And with respect to *integrity*, the character of *Eusebius* never stood so high as that of *Origen*. But you, or rather your author, *Mosheim*, shall be heard.

" I shall take," you say, " what you may think a bold step. I shall tax the veracity of your witness—of this Origen. I shall tell you that, whatever may be the general credit of his character, yet in this business the particulars of his deposition are to be little regarded, when he sets out with the allegation of a notorious falsehood. He alleges of the Hebrew Christians in general, that they had not renounced the Mosaic law. The assertion served him for an answer to the invective which Celsus had put in the mouth of a Jew against the converted Jews, as deserters of the

* *Tracts*, p. 157.

† *Pearson* makes no difficulty of contradicting Eusebius in this case, and without making any apology for him at all. His opponent, M. *Daillé*, having said *if that account be true*, he replies, " He knew very well that, strictly speaking, it was not true ; for he knew many others long before Theodotus, and not a few even before Ignatius, who taught the same heresy, a catalogue of whom may be seen in Epiphanius," and whom he proceeds to mention. *Vindiciæ*, Lib. ii. Cap. ii. p. 24. (*P.*)

laws and customs of their ancestors. The answer was not the worse for wanting truth, if his Heathen antagonist was not sufficiently informed in the true distinctions of Christian sects to detect the falsehood. But in all the time which he spent in Palestine, had Origen never conversed with Hebrew Christians of another sort? Had he met with no Christians of Hebrew families of the church of Jerusalem? Was the Mosaic law observed; was it tolerated, in Origen's days, in the church of Jerusalem, when that church was under the government of bishops of the uncircumcision? The fact is, that after the demolition of Jerusalem by Adrian, the majority of the Hebrew Christians, who must have passed for Jews with the Roman magistrates, had they continued to adhere to the Mosaic law, which to this time they had observed more from habit than from any principle of conscience, made no scruple to renounce it; that they might be qualified to partake in the valuable privileges of the Ælian colony, from which Jews were excluded. Having thus divested themselves of the form of Judaism, which to that time they had borne, they removed from Pella and other towns to which they had retired, and settled in great numbers at Ælia. The few who retained a superstitious veneration for their law remained in the North of Galilee, where they were joined perhaps by new fugitives of the same weak character from Palestine. And this was the beginning of the sect of the Nazarenes. But from this time, whatever Origen may pretend, to serve a purpose, the majority of the Hebrew Christians forsook their law, and lived in communion with the Gentile bishops of the new-modelled church of Jerusalem; for the name was retained, though Jerusalem was no more, and the seat of the bishop was at Ælia. All this I affirm with the less hesitation, being supported by the authority of Mosheim,* from whom, indeed, I first learned to rate the testimony of Origen, in this particular question, at its true value."†

Struck with this extraordinary narration of a transaction of ancient times, for which you refer to no authority besides that of *Mosheim*, I looked into him;‡ but even there I do not find all the particulars that you mention. He says nothing of the Jewish Christians having observed their law

* For which Dr. Horsley refers to "De Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum, Sæc. ii. Sect. xxxviii. *Not.*" See *supra*, p. 169, *Note* ||.

† *Letters*, p. 59. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 157, 158.

‡ Dr. Priestley seems to have overlooked Dr. Horsley's reference to Mosheim's *Commentarii*, and to have examined only his *Ecclesiastial History*. See *Cent.* ii. Pt. ii. Ch. v. *ad init.* I. p. 172; *infra*, Let. xviii., Mr. Belsham's *Note*.

more from habit than any principle of conscience; nothing of their making no scruple to renounce their law in order to partake in the privileges of the *Ælian* colony; nothing of any Jewish Christians removing from *Pella*, and settling in *Ælia;* nothing of the retiring of the rest to the North of Galilee, or of this new origin of the Nazarenes there. For all these particulars, therefore, learned Sir, you must have some other authority *in petto*, besides that of *Mosheim*, and you ought to have produced it.

Also, as you adopt the assertions of *Mosheim*, I could wish to know his authority for supposing that there was any such thing as a church, or part of a church, of Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, after the destruction of that city by *Adrian*. As to your *additions*, they are a series of such improbable circumstances as hardly any historian of the time could make credible. Bodies of men do not, whatever you may imagine, suddenly change their opinions, and much less their customs and habits: least of all would an act of *violence* produce that effect; and, of all mankind, the experiment was the least likely to answer with the Jews. If it had produced any effect for a time, the old customs and habits would certainly have returned when the danger was over. You might just as well suppose that all the *Jews* in Jerusalem began to speak *Greek*, as well as abandoned their ancient customs, in order to enjoy the valuable privileges of the *Ælian* colony. And you would have this to allege in your favour, that from that time the bishops of Jerusalem were all *Greeks;* the public offices were no doubt performed in the *Greek* language; and the church of *Jerusalem* was, indeed, in all respects as much a Greek church as that of *Antioch*.

As you say, with respect to myself, "that a man ought to be accomplished in ancient learning who thinks he may escape with impunity and without detection in the attempt to browbeat the world with a peremptory and reiterated allegation of testimonies that exist not;"* how much more accomplished ought that man to be who now writes the history of transactions in the second century, without alleging any testimony at all!

Mosheim himself, who began this accusation of *Origen*, produces no authority in his *Dissertations*† for his assertion.

* *Letters*, p. 134. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 245.

† "Dissertationes ad Historiam Ecclesiasticam pertinens." To "the tenth, in order of the first volume," Dr. Horsley refers for the "Dissertation about Ebion." See *supra*, p. 176, *Note* †.

He only says that he cannot reconcile the fact that Origen mentions, with his seeming unwillingness to allow the *Ebionites* to be Christians. But this is easily accounted for, from the attachment which he himself had to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, which they denied; and from their holding no communion with other Christians.

All the appearance of authority that I can find in any ancient writer, of the Jewish Christians deserting the law of their ancestors, is in *Sulpitius Severus*, to whom I am referred by *Mosheim* in his history.* But what he says on the subject is only what follows: "At this time Adrian, thinking that he should destroy Christianity by destroying the place, erected the images of dæmons in the church, and in the place of our Lord's sufferings; and because the Christians were thought to consist chiefly of Jews, (for then the church at Jerusalem had all its clergy of the circumcision,) ordered a cohort of soldiers to keep constant guard, and drive all Jews from any access to Jerusalem, which was of service to the Christian faith; for at that time they almost all believed Christ to be God, but with the observance of the law; the Lord so disposing it that the servitude of the law should be removed from the liberty of the faith and of the church. Then was Mark the first bishop of the Gentiles at Jerusalem."†

Where, Sir, do you find in this passage any promise of immunities to the Jewish Christians, if they would forsake the law of their fathers? On the contrary, the historian says, that the object of *Adrian* was to overturn Christianity, and that the Jews were banished because the Christians there were chiefly of that nation. According to this account, all the Jews, Christians as well as others, were driven out of Jerusalem; and nothing is said of any of them forsaking the law of Moses; and your assertion of their having been gradually prepared for it, by having before this time observed their law more from habit than from conscience, is unsupported by any authority or probability. *Eusebius* mentions

* See *supra*, p. 176, *Note* ‡.

† "Qua tempestate Adrianus, existimans se christianam fidem loci injuria perempturum, et in templo ac loco dominicæ passionis dæmonum simulachra constituit. Et quia Christiani ex Judæis potissimum putabantur (namque tum Hierosolymæ non nisi ex circumcisione habebat ecclesia sacerdotem) militum cohortem custodias in perpetuum agitare jussit, quæ Judæos omnes Hierosolymæ aditu arceret. Quod quidem christianæ fidei proficiebat; quia tum pene omnes Christum Deum sub legis observatione credebant. Nimirum id domino ordinante dispositum, ut legis servitus à libertate fidei atque ecclesiæ tolleretur. Ita tum primum Marcus ex Gentibus apud Hierosolymam episcopus fuit." *Hist.* L. ii. C. xxxi. p. 245. (*P.*)

the expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem, but says not a word of any of the Christians there abandoning circumcision and their other ceremonies on that occasion. Indeed such a thing was in the highest degree improbable.

Independent of all natural probability, had *Sulpitius Severus* actually written all that *Mosheim* advances, and all the curious particulars that you have added to complete the account; whether is it, Sir, from this writer or from *Origen* that we are more likely to gain true information on this subject? Origen, writing in controversy, and of course subject to correction, appeals to a fact as notorious in the country in which he himself resided, and in his own times, to which, therefore, he could not but have given particular attention. Whereas *Sulpitius Severus* lived in the remotest part of *Gaul*, several thousand miles from *Palestine*, and two hundred years after *Origen*, so that he could not have asserted the fact as from his own knowledge, and he quotes no other person for it. But in fact Sulpitius Severus is no more favourable to your account of the matter than Origen himself; so that to the authority of both of them, of all ancient testimony and natural probability, you have nothing to oppose but your own conjectures, and nothing to plead for this conduct, but that your poor and wretched cause requires it.

Having consulted *Eusebius* and other ancient writers to no purpose, for some account of these Jews who had deserted the religion of their ancestors, I looked into *Tillemont*, who is wonderfully careful and exact in bringing together every thing that relates to his subject; but his account of the matter differs widely indeed from *Mosheim's* and yours. He says, "The Jews converted to the faith of Christ were not excepted by Adrian from the prohibition to continue at Jerusalem, They were obliged to go out with the rest. But the Jews being then obliged to abandon Jerusalem, that church began to be composed of Gentiles; and before the death of Adrian, in the middle of the year 138, Mark, who was of Gentile race, was established their bishop."* He does not say with *Mosheim*, that this Mark was chosen by the "Jews who abandoned the Mosaic rites."†

* *Hist. des Empereurs*, Tom. II. Pt. ii. p. 506. *(P.)*

† *Eccles. Hist.* I. p. 172. *(P.)* *Mosheim's* words are, "The greatest part of the Christians who lived in *Palestine*, to prevent their being confounded with the Jews, abandoned entirely the Mosaic rites, and chose a bishop named Mark." *Cent.* ii. Pt. ii. Ch. v. *ad init.*

Fleury, I find, had the same idea of that event. He says, "From this time the Jews were forbidden to enter Jerusalem, or even to see it at a distance. The city being afterwards inhabited by Gentiles, had no other name than *Ælia*. ——Hitherto the church of Jerusalem had only been composed of Jewish converts, who observed the ritual of the law, under the liberty of the gospel; but then, as the Jews were forbidden to remain there, and guards were placed to defend the entrance of it, there were no other Christians there besides those who were of Gentile origin; and thus the remains of the servitude of the law were entirely abolished."*

Thus ends this church of orthodox Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, planted by *Mosheim*, and pretty well watered by the Archdeacon of St. Alban's; from which you have derived such great advantage to your argument. But what evidence can you bring that the ancient Jewish church at Jerusalem, even before the time of *Adrian*, was Trinitarian? If they were *Nazarenes*, Epiphanius represents them as Unitarian when *John* wrote; and who was it that converted them from Unitarians to Trinitarians, and what evidence have you of any such conversion?

What became of the Christian Jews who were driven out of Jerusalem by *Adrian*, does not appear. It is most probable that they joined their brethren at *Pella*, or *Peræa*, in *Syria*, from which they had come to reside at Jerusalem; and, indeed, what became of the whole body of the ancient Christian Jews, (none of whom can be proved to have been Trinitarians,) I cannot tell. Their numbers, we may suppose were gradually reduced, till at length they became extinct. I hope, however, we shall hear no more of them as an evidence of the antiquity of the Trinitarian doctrine.

I cannot help in this place taking some further notice of what you say with respect to this charge of a wilful falsehood on Origen. "Time was," you say, "when the practice" (viz. of using unjustifiable means to serve a good end) "was openly avowed, and Origen himself was among its defenders."† This, Sir, as is usual with you, is much too strongly stated; and, as you mention no authorities, you might think to escape detection. I believe, indeed, you went no further than *Mosheim* for it. *Jerome*, in his epistle to *Pammachius*,‡ says, that *Origen* adopted the *Platonic* doctrine, (and you, Sir, are an admirer of *Plato*,) of the sub-

* *Hist.* I. p. 316. *(P.)*

† *Letters*, p. 160. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 277.

‡ *Opera*, I. p. 496. *(P.)*

serviency of truth to utility, as with respect to deceiving enemies, &c., as Mr. Hume and other speculative moralists have done; considering the foundation of all social virtue to be the public good. But, Sir, it by no means follows from this, that such persons will ever indulge themselves in any greater violations of truth than those who hold other speculative opinions concerning the foundation of morals.

Jerome was far from saying as you do, that he reduced his theory to practice. He mentions no instance whatever of his having recourse to it, and is far indeed from vindicating you in asserting, that "the art which he recommended, he scrupled not to employ;" and that "to silence an adversary he had recourse to the wilful and deliberate allegation of a notorious falsehood."* Here, Sir, is much more in the conclusion than the premises will warrant. Many persons hold speculative principles, which their adversaries think must necessarily lead to immorality; but those who hold them should be heard on the subject; and the conclusion will not be just, unless they themselves connect immoral practices with their principles. I find, Sir, that the characters of the *dead* are no safer in your hands than those of the *living*. I am unwilling to say a harsh thing, and I wish to avoid it the more, lest I should be thought *to return railing for railing:* but really, unless you can make a better apology for yourself than I am able to suggest, you will be considered by impartial persons as a *falsifier of history*, and a *defamer of the character of the dead*, in order to serve your purpose.†

LETTER V.

Of Heresy in the earliest Times.

REV. SIR,

I ASSERTED that the *Unitarians* were not originally considered as *heretics;* and for this I have adduced a variety of arguments, one of the principal of which is, that the apostle *John*, though, according to all the evidence of antiquity, he could not but have known that Unitarians were numerous

* *Letters*, p. 160. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 277.

† "The Archdeacon endeavours to establish his charge against Origen, Pt. ii. Ch. i. of his Reply to these Letters. He complains, with some reason, that Dr. Priestley imputes to him what were in fact the assertions of Mosheim, and he endeavours to prove the existence of an orthodox Hebrew church at Elia, upon evidence independent of Mosheim. *Ibid.* Ch. ii." Mr. Belsham's *Note.* See Dr. Horsley's *Tracts*, pp. 348—353, 362—377; *supra*, p. 176, *Note* ‡.

in his time, never censures them; whereas he writes with the greatest indignation against the tenets which belonged to the opposite system of *Gnosticism*. I observed the same with respect to *Hegesippus*, *Justin Martyr*, and *Clemens Alexandrinus*. I now find the same to be true of *Polycarp* and *Ignatius*, and that even *Irenæus*, *Tertullian*, and *Origen* did not treat the Unitarians as heretics.

You insist upon it, however, that *John* does censure the Unitarian doctrine; which is curious enough, when, according to your account, there were no *Ebionites* or *Nazarenes*, that is, none who denied the pre-existence of Christ, till long after the time of *John*. But passing this, you acknowledge that the phrase *coming in the flesh* alludes to the proper humanity of Christ, and therefore respects the *Gnostics*: but you maintain that it likewise alludes to a *prior state*; so that we may necessarily infer from it that he was a being of a higher rank before his coming in the flesh.

You say, "The attempt to assign a reason why the Redeemer should be a man, implies both that he might have been, without partaking of the human nature, and by consequence that, in his own proper nature, he was originally something different from man; and that there might have been an expectation that he would make his appearance in some form above the human."* But it is certainly quite sufficient to account for the apostle's using that phrase, *coming in the flesh*, that in his time there actually existed an opinion that Christ was not truly a man, but was a being of a higher order, which was precisely the doctrine of the *Gnostics*. That before the appearance of the *Messiah*, any persons expected that he would or might come in a form above the human, I absolutely deny.

"A reason," you say, "why a man should be a man, one would not expect to find in a sober man's discourse."† But certainly it was very proper to give a reason why one who was *not* thought to be properly a man was really so; which is what the apostle has done.

As you call upon me so loudly to give any proof that the phrase *coming in the flesh* is descriptive of the *Gnostic* heresy only, and not of the *Unitarian* doctrine also, I shall give an answer that may perhaps satisfy you; which is, that it is so used in the Epistle of *Polycarp*, the disciple of *John*. In a passage in this Epistle, in which the writer evidently

* *Letters*, p. 27. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 115, 116.
† *Letters*, p. 27. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 115.

alludes to the *Gnostics* only, he introduces this very phrase, *coming in the flesh.* "Being zealous of what is good, abstaining from all offence, and from false brethren, and from those who bear the name of Christ in hypocrisy, and who deceive vain men. *For whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, he is Antichrist;* and whosoever does not confess his suffering upon the cross, is from the devil; and whosoever perverts the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts, and says that there shall neither be any resurrection nor judgment, he is of the first-born of Satan. Wherefore, leaving the vanity of many, and their false doctrines, let us return to the word that was delivered to us from the beginning."*

Had this writer proceeded no further than the second clause, in which he mentions those who did not believe that Christ suffered upon the cross, it might have been supposed that he alluded to *two* classes of men, and that the latter were different from those who denied that he came in the flesh. But as he goes on to mention a third circumstance, viz. the denial of the resurrection, and we are sure that those were not a third class of persons, it is evident that he alluded to no more than one and the same kind of persons by all the three characters. I conclude, therefore, that the apostle John, from whom the writer of this epistle had this phrase, used it in the same sense, and meant by it only those persons who believed that Christ was not truly man, that is, the *Gnostics.*

Besides, is it not extraordinary that, if this apostle conceived the indignation that you suppose him to have entertained against the Unitarians, he should give no intimation of it except in this one ambiguous expression? You own that he marks the *Gnostics* clearly enough, and expresses the strongest aversion to them. How came he, then, to spare the *Unitarians*, who have been so odious since? You must own that, in the course of his gospel, he inserts many expressions which, when literally interpreted, militate strongly against the doctrine of the divinity of Christ; as when, according to him, our Saviour says, "My Father is greater than I;"† "I can of mine own self do nothing;"‡ "I live by the Father;" § "The Father that dwelleth in me, he

* *Ep. to the Philippians*, Sect. vi. vii., *Wake*, pp. 55, 56. *(P.)*
† *John* xiv. 28. See Vol. XIII. p. 316.
‡ *John* v. 30. § *Ibid* vi. 57.

doeth the works."* The Father is "the only true God,"† &c. If the apostle knew that there were in his time those who believed that Christ was a mere man, while he himself believed him to be God, is it not extraordinary that he should give them such an advantage from the language of our Saviour in his own gospel; and that he should have taken no care to qualify or explain it? Persons who are aware of a dangerous opinion, and wish to guard others against it, do not write as he does.

You will probably say, that *John* taught the divinity of Christ with sufficient clearness in the introduction to his gospel, which might serve as a guard against any mistake with respect to such expressions as those above quoted. But it appears that the ancient Unitarians understood that introduction as we now do, taking the *Logos* to mean not *Christ*, but the *wisdom and power of God* residing in him, and acting by him. The *Noetian*, in *Hippolytus*, says, "You tell me something new when you call the Son *Logos*."‡ And the oldest opinion on the subject is, that in that introduction *John* alluded to the *Gnostics* only, as he did in his epistles.

Ignatius also frequently mentions *heresy* and *heretics*, and, like *John* and *Polycarp*, with great indignation; but it is evident to every person who is at all acquainted with the history, learning, and language of those times, and of the subsequent ones, that he had no persons in his eye but the *Gnostics* only. I desire no other evidence of this besides a careful inspection of the passages. I shall recite only one of them, from the *Epistle to the Smyrnæans*. Speaking of his own sufferings, he says, "He who was made a perfect man strenghtening me. Whom some, not knowing, do deny; or rather, have been denied by him, being the advocates of death rather than of the truth. Whom neither the prophecies nor the law of *Moses* have persuaded; nor the gospel itself, even to this day, nor the sufferings of every one of us. For they think also the same things of us. For what does a man profit me, if he shall praise me, and blaspheme my Lord; not confessing that he was *truly* made man? Now he that doth not say this, does in effect deny him, and is in death. But for the names of such *as do this*,

* *John* xiv. 10. See Vol. XIII. pp. 314, 315.

† *John* xvii. 3. See Vol. XIII. pp. 332, 333.

‡ Αλλ' εχει μοι τις, ξενον μοι φερεις λογον λεγων υἱον. *Contra Noetum*, Sect. xv. p. 16. *(P.)*

they being unbelievers, I thought it not fitting to write them unto you. Yea, God forbid that I should make any mention of them till they shall repent, to *a true belief* of Christ's passion, which is our resurrection! Let no man deceive himself," &c.* He afterwards speaks of these persons abstaining "from the *eucharist* and from the public offices, because they confess not the eucharist to be the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ; which suffered for our sins, and which the Father, of his goodness, raised *again from the dead*.—It will, therefore," he adds, "become you to abstain from such persons, and not to speak with them, neither in private nor in public."†

How like is this to the writings of the apostle *John*, and how well they explain each other! Here we see the *blasphemy* ascribed to the *Gnostics*, which *Justin* mentions, their separating themselves from the communion of Christians, their denying the resurrection, and their pride. Now, how came this writer, like *John*, never to censure the *Unitarians*, if he had thought them to be heretics? That they existed in his time, there never was a doubt, except what is just started in this last publication of yours. It can only be accounted for on the supposition that he himself, as well as the apostle *John*, were Unitarians, and that they had no idea of any *heresies* besides those of the different kinds of *Gnostics*.

Pearson says, that *Ignatius* refers to the doctrine of the *Ebionites* in his *Epistle to Polycarp*, and in those to the *Ephesians*, the *Magnesians*, and the *Philadelphians;* but I find no such references in them, except perhaps two passages which may easily be supposed to have been altered; because when corrected by an Unitarian, nothing is wanting to the evident purpose of the writer; whereas, his censures of the *Gnostics* are frequent and copious; so that no person can pretend to leave them without materially injuring the epistles.

Besides, there are in these epistles of *Ignatius* several things that are unfavourable to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. Thus to the *Ephesians* he says, "How much more must I think you happy who are so joined *to him*" (the bishop) "as the church is to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ to the Father; that so all things may agree in the same unity!"‡ To the *Magnesians* he says, "As therefore the

* Sect. iv.—vi., *Wake*, p. 116. *(P.)*
† *Ibid.* (Sect. vii.) p. 117.
‡ *Ibid.* (Sect. v.) p. 66. *(P.)*

Lord did nothing without the Father, being united to him, neither by himself nor *yet* by his apostles; so neither do ye do any thing without your bishop and presbyters."*

What this excellent man said when he appeared before the emperor *Trajan*, was the language of an *Unitarian*. "You err," he said, "in that you call the evil spirits of the Heathens, GODS. *For there is but one God*, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that are in them; and *one Jesus Christ*, his only-begotten Son; whose kingdom may I enjoy!"†

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

Of the Sentiments of Justin Martyr, Irenæus, and Clemens Alexandrinus, concerning Heresy.

REV. SIR,

IF, after what I have seen in your *Charge* and in these *Letters*, I could be surprised at any thing you say on these subjects, it would be at your so confidently maintaining,‡ that *Justin Martyr* had a view to the Unitarians in those accounts of *heresy in general* which I quoted from him;§ when any person with a small portion of that reading of which you pretend to so much, must know that every word and phrase in those accounts, especially the charge of *pride*, *atheism*, and *blasphemy*, is appropriated to the *Gnostics*, and the Gnostics only. I must take the liberty to say, that you know nothing at all of the ancient ecclesiastical writers, if you can imagine that the Unitarians are ever described by them in this manner. I am even ashamed to argue with any man who, if he has read the early fathers at all, has read them to so little purpose.

To me it is indisputably clear that *Justin Martyr* considered no other class of persons as heretics, unfit to have communion with Christians, but the *Gnostics* only. Let any reasonable man but compare these passages in which he censures the Gnostics with so much severity, with those in which he speaks of the Unitarians, (in which I still am of opinion he makes an apology to them for his own principles, but which certainly imply no censure,) and I think he can-

* Sect. vii., *Wake*, p. 80. *(P.)*
† *Ibid.* p. 131. *(P.)* "Relation of the Martyrdom of St. Ignatius," Sect. v.
‡ *Letters*, p. 79. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 180.
§ See *supra*, pp. 16—20, 64, 65.

not but conclude with me, that Unitarianism was considered in those times in a very different light from what it was afterwards, and is now.

Justin also particularly mentions his having no objection to hold communion with those *Jewish* Christians who observed the law of *Moses*, provided they did not impose it upon others.* Now who could those be but *Jewish* Unitarians? For, agreeable to the evidence of all antiquity, all the Jewish Christians were such.

It is truly remarkable, and may not have been observed by you, as indeed it was not by myself till very lately, that *Irenæus*, who has written so large a work on the subject of heresy, after the time of *Justin*, and in a country where it is probable there were fewer Unitarians, again and again characterizes them in such a manner as makes it evident that even *he* did not consider any other persons as being properly heretics besides the *Gnostics*. He expresses a great dislike of the *Ebionites;* but though he appears to have known none of them besides those who denied the miraculous conception, he never calls them *heretics*. I had thought that in one passage he had included them in that appellation; but observing that in his introduction and other places, in which he speaks of *heretics in general*, he evidently meant the *Gnostics* only, and could not carry his views any further, I was led to reconsider that particular passage, and I found that I had been mistaken in my construction of it.

"All heretics," he says, "being untaught, and ignorant of the dispensations of God, and especially of that which relates to man, as being blind with respect to the truth, oppose their own salvation; some introducing another Father besides the maker of the world; others saying, that the world, and the matter of it, was made by angels," &c.; and after mentioning other similar opinions, he adds, "Others not knowing the dispensation of the Virgin, say, that he (Jesus) was begotten by Joseph. Some say, that neither

* *Dial.* p. 23. This circumstance may throw some light on the passage in *Jerome*, in which he speaks of the *Ebionites* as anathematized solely on account of their adherence to the Jewish law. The Ebionites, at least many of them, would have imposed the yoke of the *Jewish* law upon the *Gentile* Christians, they would not communicate with those who were not circumcised, and of course these would not communicate with them; so they were necessarily in a state of excommunication with respect to each other. This would also be the case with the *Cerinthians*, as well as the *Ebionites*, and therefore *Jerome* mentions them together, the separation of communion with respect to both, arising from the observance of the law of Moses; though Jerome might write unguardedly, as he often did, in confounding the case of the Cerinthians so much as he here does with that of the Ebionites. (*P.*)

the soul nor the body can receive eternal life, but the internal man only,"* that is, that they denied the resurrection.

Now, as *Cerinthus* and *Carpocrates*, and other *Gnostics*, denied the miraculous conception, as well as the *Ebionites*, and all the rest of this description, both before and after this circumstance, evidently belongs to the *Gnostics* only, and as in no other place whatever does he comprehend them in his definition of *heresy*, it is natural to conclude that he had no view to them even here, but only to those *Gnostics* who, in common with them, denied the miraculous conception. If there be any other passage in *Irenæus*, in which he calls, or seems to call, the Ebionites *heretics*, I have overlooked it. The *Ebionites* were *Jews*, and had no communion with the *Gentiles*, at least that appears; and Irenæus says nothing at all of the Unitarians among the Gentiles, who generally believed the miraculous conception, though, as appears from other evidence, they constituted the great mass of the unlearned Christians.

Clemens Alexandrinus makes frequent mention of heretics, and expresses as much abhorrence of them as *Justin Martyr* does; but it is evident that, in all the places in which he speaks of them, his idea of heresy was confined to *Gnosticism*. He considers it as an answer to *all heretics* to prove that "there is one God, the Almighty Lord, who was preached by the law and the prophets, and also in the blessed gospel."† He also speaks of heresy as "borrowed from a barbarous philosophy;" and says of heretics, that, "though they say there is one God, and sing hymns to Christ, it was not according to truth; for that they introduced another God, and such a Christ as the prophets had not foretold."‡ He likewise speaks of heretics in general, as having a high opinion of their own knowledge, οιησιν γνωσεως ειληφοτων.§ He calls them δοξισοφοι, *men who think that they have found the truth*,‖ and ὑπο δοξοσοφιας επηρ-

* "Indocti omnes hæretici, et ignorantes dispositiones Dei, et inscii ejus quæ est secundum hominem dispensationis, quippe cæcutientes circa veritatem, ipsi suæ contradicunt saluti. Alii quidem alterum introducentes præter demiurgum patrem. Alii autem ab angelis quibusdam dicentes factum esse mundum, et substantiam ejus, &c. Alii autem rursus ignorantes Virginis dispensationem, ex Joseph dicunt eum generatum. Et quidam quidem neque animam suam neque corpus recipere posse dicunt æternam vitam, sed tantum hominem interiorem." *Lib.* v. Cap. xix. p. 429. (*P.*)

† Και απασαις εντευθεν ταις αιρεσεσιν ἑνα δεικνυναι Θεον και Κυριον παντοκρατορα, τον δια νομου και προφητων, προς δε και μακαριου ευαγγελιου γνησιως κεκηρυγμενον. *Strom.* Lib. vi. p. 475. (*P.*)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 675. See also pp. 542, 662. (*P.*)

§ *Ibid.* L. vii. p. 754. (*P.*)

‖ *Ibid.* p. 755. (*P.*)

μενοι, *elated with a conceit of their knowledge.** He says, that "heresy began in the time of *Adrian*,"† when it is well known that *Basilides*, and the most distinguished of the *Gnostics*, made their appearance. He says the heretics went by different names, and those of *Valentinus*, *Marcion*, and *Basilides*, mentioning none but *Gnostics*.‡ It may only be conjectured that he meant the *Ebionites* by the *Peratici*, enumerated by him among those who had their denomination from the place of their residence. But this is the only passage in which the word occurs. He never includes the *Gentile* Unitarians among heretics, and even your great authority, *Mosheim*, allows, (what indeed he could not deny,) that the Unitarians lived in communion with the Catholic church in the early ages.§

As the strict *Ebionites* held no communion with the *Gentile* Christians, it is very possible that *Clemens Alexandrinus* might insert them in a catalogue of heretics, and allude to them under the name of *Peratici*, without intending any censure of their doctrine with respect to Christ. Besides, this was a name given them, as he says, from their place of residence, and therefore did not include the Unitarians among the Gentiles.

It is clear to me, from the attention that I have lately given to this subject, that even long after the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was established by councils and the decrees of emperors, the common people were well known to believe nothing of the matter; and yet, if they made no disturbance, and did not think proper to separate from the communion of the orthodox themselves, they were not excommunicated. This may be inferred from the passage which I quoted from *Athanasius*;‖ but of which you have taken no notice, from which it appears that the Unitarians were the οἱ πολλοι, *the many*. In the time of *Tertullian* they were the *major pars credentium*, the *greater part of believers*;¶ and in the time of *Origen* they were the το πληθος, *the multitude*, and the τα πληθη, *the multitudes*.

I am, &c.

* *Strom.* L. vii. p. 759. *(P.)* † *Ibid.* p. 764. *(P.)* ‡ *Ibid.* p. 765. *(P.)*

§ What I find on this subject in *Mosheim*, is the following, in his *Commentarii*: "The Ebionites and Nazarenes have, I well know, always hitherto been classed with the sects of the first age, but to me this appears irreconcileable with reason; for it can be indisputably proved, that those of the Christians who persisted in adhering to the observance of the law of Moses, did not separate themselves from the rest of the brethren, until Jerusalem, which had just begun to rise again from its ashes, was secondly and finally laid waste by the Romans, in the time of the emperor Hadrian.—Previously to their acting thus, they were regarded by no one in any other light than as true Christians." *Translation*, 1813, I. p. 296, *Note*.

See *supra*, pp. 76, 77.

¶ *Supra*, pp. 17, 23, 24.

LETTER VII.

Of the State of Heresy in the Time of Tertullian.

REV. SIR,

NOTHING can well be more evident than that *Tertullian* represents the great body of unlearned Christians in his time as Unitarians, and even holding the doctrine of the Trinity in great abhorrence. It is hardly possible in the form of words to describe this state of things more clearly than he does.* Indeed, with respect to this you are pleased to make some concession, though by no means such as the case requires.

"I must confess, Sir," you say, "here seems to be a complaint against the unlearned Christians, as in general unfavourable to the Trinitarian doctrine. But," you add, "the complaint is of your own raising. Tertullian will vouch but for a very small part of it. 'Simple persons,' says Tertullian, '(not to call them ignorant and idiots,) who always make the majority of believers, because the rule of faith itself carries us away from the many gods of the Heathen to the one true God; not understanding that one God is indeed to be believed, but with an economy (or arrangement) startle at the economy. They take it for granted that the number and disposition of the Trinity is a division of the Unity. They pretend that two, and even three, are preached by us, and imagine that they themselves are the worshippers of one God. We, they say, *hold the monarchy*. Latins have caught up the word *monarchia*, Greeks will not understand *œconomia*.' Let the author's words be thus exactly rendered, and you will find in them neither complaint nor acknowledgement of a general prevalence of the Unitarian doctrine among Christians of any rank. Tertullian alleges, that what credit it obtained was only with the illiterate, nor with all the illiterate, but with those only who were ignorant and stupid in the extreme. To preclude the plea of numbers, he remarks, that the illiterate will always make the majority of believers. 'Some simple people,' he says, 'take alarm at the notion of a plurality of persons in the unity of the Godhead.'"†

Here, Sir, I complain of two gross misrepresentations of your author; the first respects the *number* of these simple

* See Vol. V. p. 41. † *Letters*, p. 74. *(P.) Tracts*, pp. 175, 176.

people, and the second the degree of their simplicity, or, as you call it, *stupidity*. Whoever *Tertullian* meant by the *simplices* and the *idiotæ*, for any thing that appears, he meant the whole body of them. His language is general and unlimited, and therefore you are altogether unwarranted in your limitation of it to *some of them*. I really wonder at your assurance in this. I am far from construing *Tertullian* rigorously, and am ready to allow that *some* of these *simplices* and *idiotæ* might profess to believe the doctrine of the Trinity, though he says nothing of it; but making all reasonable deductions on this account, he asserts a palpable falsehood, and against himself, if a very great majority of these *simplices* and *idiotæ* were not Unitarians. On the whole, it is impossible not to infer from this passage, that in the time of *Tertullian* the great body of unlearned Christians were Unitarians, and that they were so in part from their construction of the *regula fidei*, or the *creed*, to which they gave their assent at baptism. They even regarded the doctrine of the Trinity with horror, as nothing less than idolatry, enjoining the worship of more gods than one. Common sense can put no other construction on this passage, and *Tertullian* is far from being singular in this acknowledgment. It is made in different modes by several of the fathers, even later than the age of *Tertullian*.

In the next place, I complain of the *degree* of simplicity, or, as you call it, stupidity, with which you charge these Unitarians. Tertullian calls them *idiotæ*, which you render *idiots*, and this you have the assurance to call an *exact translation*. You say, that I consult only the "ordinary lexicons."* Pray, Sir, in what lexicon or dictionary, ordinary or extraordinary, did you find this sense of the term *idiota* in Latin, or ἰδιωτης in Greek? Can you produce any passage in an ancient writer in which the word has that meaning? I will venture to say that it properly signifies *an unlearned man*, or a person who has not had a learned or liberal education. But such persons may have as good sense as those who have had that advantage, and may judge as truly concerning the great principles of religion as the most learned. The doctrine of one God, or two Gods, requires no knowledge of the learned languages; and you, Sir, perhaps, would have understood Christianity no worse if you had never heard of the *Parmenides*.

It is most natural to interpret the language of any writer

* *Letters*, p. 91. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 195.

by the use of it in other writers of the same age, character and profession. Now the translator of *Irenæus* certainly uses the word *idiota* (ἰδιωτης, no doubt, in the original *Greek*) for *an unlearned man*, without the least reference to any weakness of understanding. Speaking of the heretics, who boasted of their knowledge, he says, "*Non contemplantes quanto pluris sit idiota religiosus à blasphemo et impudente sophista:* Not considering how much better is a religious and unlearned man than a blasphemous and impious sophist."* Certainly you would not render it *a religious idiot*, for idiots are incapable of religion. From the *blasphemy* here ascribed to heretics, who were *Gnostics*, you may also take a hint for the right understanding of the quotation from *Justin*.

Theodoret, in his explanation of 1 *Cor.* xiv. 16, says, that "by ἰδιωτης was meant *a layman*, because it is the custom to call those ἰδιωτας who were not engaged in war;"† meaning, perhaps, those who had no public employments.

Our translators of the *New Testament* had a very different idea from yours of the meaning of the word ἰδιωτης. For, in *Acts* iv. 13, we read, that when *Peter* and *John* were examined before the high-priest and his kindred, "they wondered at their boldness, because they perceived them to be ἰδιωται;" but it is not rendered *idiots*, which would have been absurd enough, but "unlearned and ignorant men." In 1 *Cor.* xiv. the word occurs three times, and is always translated *unlearned;*‡ and in 2 *Cor.* xi. 6, Paul calls himself ἰδιωτης, and he could not be supposed to have called himself *an idiot*. It is there rendered *rude*.

One of your proofs that Unitarianism was proscribed in the primitive church in the time of *Tertullian*, is his saying that the *regula fidei*, in his treatise *de Præscriptione*, was the belief of all Christians.§ But every writer, if we wish not to cavil, but to understand his real meaning, must be interpreted in a manner consistent with himself. It is a degree of candour that is due to all writers; and what you strongly plead for in the case of *Eusebius*. Now, concerning what we now call *the Apostles' Creed*, Tertullian expresses himself in such a manner (in his treatise *De Virginibus velandis)* as gives us clearly to understand that this was all that was necessary to the faith of a Christian. This creed might be subscribed by any Unitarian who believed the miraculous

* L. v. C. xx. (*P.*)
‡ See *vers.* 16, 23, 24.
† *Opera*, III. p. 191. (*P.*)
§ *Letters*, p. 83. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 185.

conception. The other creed, therefore, which is not the apostles', must be his own comment or exposition of the proper *regula fidei*, or creed, (and indeed it has all the appearance of a comment, as may be seen by the comparison,) and all that we can conclude from it is, that it contains his own opinion, which is well known from his writings in general.

To prove that the *regula fidei* in the treatise *De Præscriptione* was the belief of all Christians in that age, you must prove that it was the creed that all Christians gave their assent to; and this assent was only given at the time of baptism. But that *regula fidei* (which supposes the pre-existence of Christ) is nowhere to be found but in this particular passage in the writings of *Tertullian;* whereas, that which is called *the Apostles' Creed*, is, with some variations, frequently mentioned, and is known to have been the only creed that was used at baptism in the time of *Tertullian*, and long afterwards.

That *Tertullian* alluded to none but the *Gnostics* in the *regula fidei* of his treatise *De Præscriptione*, is evident from every clause in it, and from the object of the work, which respects the *Gnostics* only, the Unitarians being only occasionally and slightly mentioned in it. Though, therefore, a single feature in this account is found in the *Unitarians* as well as in the *Gnostics*, it is the *whole character* that we are to attend to, and not that feature in particular.

In all other places in which I have found *Tertullian* to speak of *heresy in general*, it is most evident that his ideas went no further than to the opinions of the *Gnostics*, except that he once calls *Ebion* a heretic, and then he expressly makes his heresy to consist in his observance of the Jewish ritual.*

"Heresies," he says, "do not differ from idolatry, having the same author and the same work with idolaters; for that they make another God against the Creator; or, if they acknowledge one creator, they discourse of him in a manner different from the truth."† *Heretics*, he says, "deny that God is to be feared;"‡ which agrees with his saying that

* "Ad Galatas scribens invehitur in observatores et defensores circumcisionis et legis. Hebionis hæresis est." *De Præs.* Sect. xxxiii. *Opera*, p. 214. *(P.)*

† "Neque ab idololatria distare hæreses, cum et auctoris et operis ejusdem sint cujus et idololatria. Deum aut fingunt alium adversus Creatorem, aut, si unicum creatorem confitentur, aliter eum disserunt quam in vero." *De Præs.* Sect. xl. *Opera*, p. 217. *(P.)*

‡ "Negant Deum timendum." *De Præs.* Sect. xliii. *Opera*, p. 218. *(P.)*

"the Heathen philosophers were the patriarchs of heresy,"* for they held that doctrine; but it was very remote from any thing that is ever laid to the charge of the Unitarians.

"Heretics," he says, "associated with the magi, with fortune-tellers, with astrologers, with philosophers; being actuated by a principle of curiosity; so that the quality of their faith may be judged of from their manner of life, for discipline is the index of doctrine."†

The whole of this account is inconsistent with *Tertullian's* considering Unitarians as heretics; but much more is his saying that "the *Valentinians* were the most numerous of all the heretics,"‡ and that "the heretics had nothing to do with their discipline. Their want of communion," he says, "shews that they are foreign to us."§ For it is most evident that those whom he calls *simplices* and *idiotæ* were ranked by him among the *credentes*, or *believers*. They were even the *major pars credentium*, though Unitarians, and holding the doctrine of the Trinity in abhorrence.

Let any person judge from the whole of this, if it must not have been inconsiderate, at least, in *Tertullian*, and inconsistent with himself, to call those persons heretics, who could not subscribe to that form of the creed which includes the article of pre-existence, and which was not assented to at baptism.

Tertullian also recites the articles of the creed in a third form, in his book against *Praxeas*. But as in the former he evidently had a view to the *Gnostics* only, so in this he had a view to the opinions of *Praxeas*, whom he was refuting. This, therefore, as well as the other, though delivered in the form of a creed, and said to be held by all Christians, can only be considered as his own comment upon it, and as containing his own opinion. It is as follows:

"We believe in one God, but under that dispensation which we call the *œconomy;* so that there is also a son of this one God, his word, who proceeded from him, by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made;

* "Hæreticorum patriarchæ philosophi." *Adv. Hermog.* Sect. viii. *Opera*, p. 236. (*P.*)

† "Notata etiam sunt commercia hæreticorum cum magis, quampluribus: cum circulatoribus, cum astrologis, cum philosophis, curiositati scilicet deditis.—Adeo et de genere conversationis qualitas fidei æstimari potest: doctrinæ index disciplina est." *De Præs.* Sect. xliii. *Opera*, p. 218. *(P.)*

‡ "Valentiniani frequentissimum plani collegium inter hæreticos." *Adv. Valent.* Sect. i. *Opera*, p. 250. (*P.*)

§ "Hæretici autem nullum habent consortium nostræ disciplinæ, quos extraneos utique testatur ipsa ademptio communicationis." *De Baptismo*, Sect. xv. *Opera*, p. 230. (*P.*)

that he was sent by the Father into a virgin, and of her born man and God, the son of man, and the son of God, and called Jesus Christ; that he suffered, died, and was buried, according to the Scriptures; that he was raised by the Father, and taken up again into heaven; that he sits at the right hand of the Father, and will come to judge the living and the dead; who thence, according to his promise, sent from the Father the Holy Spirit, the comforter, and the sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."*

Let the impartial reader then judge whether we are not more likely to find the genuine proper creed, which was considered as containing the *faith of all Christians*, unmixed with any peculiar opinions of *Tertullian's* own, in the treatise *De Virginibus velandis*, in which he is not opposing *orthodoxy* to *heterodoxy*, but simply *faith* to *practice*.

I am really surprised that you should lay so much stress on the testimony of *Tertullian*, admitting it to be clear and uniform, which it is far from being, and also on that of *Eusebius*, with respect to the general faith of Christians even in their own times, and much more in times preceding them, when it is so common for men to represent the opinions of those whom they esteem, as the same with their own. Every man should be heard with caution when he praises himself; and what he says in one place should be compared with what he says in another, and especially what he drops as it were accidentally, and when he was off his guard. As I said before, "their evidence in these cases is not to be regarded, unless they bring some sufficient proof of their assertions."

Had *Tertullian*, *Origen*, and others, thought more highly of the *common people* than they did, we should probably never have known from them what their opinions were. But happily for us they thought meanly of them, and, without being aware of the use and value of the information, have given us sufficient lights into this very important circumstance in the history of their times. But in this, as

* "Unicum quidem Deum credimus, sub hac tamen dispensatione quam œconomiam dicimus, ut unici Dei sit et filius sermo ipsius, qui ex ipso processerit, per quem omnia facta sunt, et sine quo factum est nihil; hunc missum à Patre in virginem, et ex ea natum hominem et deum, filium hominis et filium Dei, et cognominatum Jesum Christum. Hunc passum, hunc mortuum, et sepultum, secundum scripturas, et resuscitatum à Patre, et in cælos resumptum, sedere ad dextram Patris, venturum judicare vivos et mortuos, qui exinde miserit, secundum promissionem suam, à Patre spiritum sanctum, paracletum, sanctificatorem fidei eorum qui credunt in Patrem et Filium et Spiritum sanctum." *Adv. Praxeam*, Sect. ii. *Opera*, p. 501. (*P.*)

well as in several other respects, you, Sir, have been led into several mistakes through your ignorance of human nature; the knowledge of which, and a due attention to it, would have been of much more service to you in these inquiries than your knowledge of *Greek*, in which, however, I do not perceive that you greatly abound. This ignorance of human nature appears in your insisting,* that if I admit the evidence of *Eusebius* for the existence of the *Ebionites* in the time of the apostles, I must admit his testimony to their condemnation of them.

As *Theodotus*, who appeared in the time of *Tertullian*, is called a heretic in the Appendix to *Tertullian's* book *De Præscriptione*,† I think it probable that, after his excommunication, he formed a church of pure Unitarians, and might be the first who set up a separate place of worship on that account, and therefore was denominated a *heretic* in the original sense of that word; and this circumstance might give rise to the opinion that he was the first who taught the doctrine.

When Eusebius wrote so as evidently to suppose that the Ebionites existed in the time of the apostles, you say, "I consider it as a hasty assertion of a writer over zealous to overwhelm his adversary by authorities."‡ I suspect that he may have been guilty of something like this, when he said that *Theodotus* was excommunicated by *Victor* on account of his Unitarian principles. That he was excommunicated I admit; but that his Unitarian principles was the sole ground of his excommunication I have some doubt, considering your own idea of the credit of the witness, which indeed is pretty much the same as my own.

I am, &c.

LETTER VIII.

Of Origen's Idea of Heresy.

Rev. Sir,

What I have said concerning *Clemens Alexandrinus* and *Tertullian* is true also of *Origen*, and these writers may help to explain each other. No man took more pains to inculcate the doctrine of the *Logos* than Origen, and he thought meanly of those Christians who did not adopt it, considering them as of an inferior rank; but I believe he never

* *Letters*, p. 174. (*P.*)
‡ *Letters*, p. 173. (*P.*)
† See *supra*, p. 53, *Note* *.

classes them with *heretics;* and whenever he speaks of *heretics in general*, he, as well as all preceding writers, evidently had a view to the *Gnostics* only.* In his treatise entitled *Philosophumena*, which is the first of his books against the heretics, it is evident that he considered none in that light besides the *Gnostics.*†

In one place he evidently considers the Unitarians and heretics separately, as two distinct classes of men; but supposes that the Unitarians confounded the persons of the Father and the Son, on which account they were called *Patripassians.* But notwithstanding the evil that he says of them, he acknowledges that they adhere to their opinion, as thinking that it did honour to Christ, as on other occasions he ascribes it to their regard to the one true God the Father. "We are not," says he, "to consider those as taking the part of Christ who think falsely concerning him, out of an idea of doing him honour. Such are those who confound the intellect of the Father and the Son, distinguishing their substance in idea and name only; and also the *heretics*, who, out of a desire of speaking magnificently concerning him, carry their blasphemy very high, even to the Maker of the world, are not on his side."‡

It is evident to me that in the time of *Origen*, viz. the beginning of the third century, the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was so far from being generally received, except by the bishops and the more learned of the clergy; that it was considered as a sublime doctrine, proper, indeed, for persons who had made advances in divine knowledge, but not adapted to the vulgar, who were content with the plain doctrine of Jesus Christ, and him crucified; looking no further than to his humanity, as it is delivered in the gospels of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*. *John's* doctrine of the *Logos* was thought to be too sublime for the generality of Christians.

"No one," says *Origen*, "taught the divinity of Christ so clearly as *John*, who presents him to us, saying, I am the light of the world; I am the way, the truth, and the life; I

* See his *Commentary on Matt.* I. pp. 156, 159, 212, 287, 475, and many other passages in his writings. (*P.*)

† See pp. 6, 8, and 16, of that work, as published by *Wolfius* at *Hamburg*, in 1706. (*P.*)

‡ Ου νομιζειν γαρ ειναι ὑπερ αυτη της τα ψευδη φρονεντας περι αυτε φαντασια, τε δοξαζειν αυτον· ὁποιοι εισιν συγχεοντες πατρος και ὑιε εννοιαν, και τη ὑποστασει ἑνα διδοντες ειναι τον πατερα και τον ὑιον, τη επινοια μονη, και τοις ονομασι, διαιρεντες το ἐν ὑποκειμενον· και οἱ απο των αἱρεσεων, φαντασια τε μεγαλα περι αυτε φρονειν, αδικιαν εις το ὑψος λαλεντες, και κακως λεγοντες τον δημιργον, ουκ εισιν ὑπερ αυτε. "Comment in Matt.;—Origenis Commentar." ed. *Huetii*, *Rothomag.* 1668, I. p. 470. (*P.*)

am the resurrection; I am the gate; I am the good shepherd; and in the *Revelation*, I am the *alpha* and *omega*, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. We may, therefore, boldly say, that as the gospels are the first-fruits (or most excellent part) of the Scriptures, so the gospel of *John* is the first-fruits of the gospels; the sense of which no person can conceive except he who reclines on the breast of Jesus, and who can receive from Jesus his mother Mary, and make her his own. He must be another John, who was shewn by Jesus as another Jesus. For, he who is perfect does not himself live, but Christ lives in him; and since Christ lives in him, he says to Mary concerning him, Behold thy son, Christ himself."*

"This," says he, "we ought to understand, that as the law was a shadow of good things to come, so is the gospel as it is understood by the generality. But that which *John* calls the *everlasting gospel*, and which may be more properly called the *spiritual*, instructs the intelligent very clearly concerning the Son of God. Wherefore the gospel must be taught both corporeally and spiritually; and, when it is necessary, we must preach the corporeal gospel, saying to the carnal, that we know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. But when persons are found confirmed in the spirit, bringing forth fruits in it, and in love with heavenly wisdom, we must impart to them the *Logos* returning from his bodily state, in that he was in the beginning with God."†

"There are," says he, "who partake of the *Logos* which was from the beginning, the *Logos* that was with God, and the *Logos* that was God, as *Hosea*, *Isaiah* and *Jeremiah*, and any others that speak of him as the *Logos* of God, and the

* Ουδεις γαρ εκειναν ακρατως εφανερωσεν αυτη την Θεοτητα ως Ιωαννης, παραστησας αυτον λεγοντα, Εγω ειμι το φως τη κοσμω, εγω ειμι η οδος, και η αληθεια, και η ζωη· εγω ειμι η αναστασις, εγω ειμι η θυρα, εγω ειμι ο ποιμην ο καλος· και εν τη Αποκαλυψει, Εγω ειμι το α και το ω, η αρχη και το τελος, ο πρωτος και ο εσχατος. Τολμητεον τοινυν ειπειν απαρχην μεν πασων γραφων ειναι τα ευαγγελια, των δε ευαγγελιων απασχην το κατα Ιωαννην, ου τον νουν ουδεις δυναται λαβειν μη αναπεσων επι το στηθος Ιησου, μηδε λαβων απο Ιησου την Μαριαν γενομενην και αυτω μητερα· και τηλικουτον δε γενεσθαι δει τον εσομενον αλλον Ιωαννην, ως τε οιονει τον Ιωαννην δεξχθηναι οντα Ιησουν απο Ιησου——και γαρ πας ο τετελειωμενος ζη ουκετι, αλλ' εν αυτω ζη Χριστος, και επει ζη εν αυτω Χριστος, λεγεται περι αυτου τη Μαριᾳ, Ιδε ο υιος σου ο Χριστος. "Comment. in Johan." II. p. 5. (*P.*)

† Και τουτο δε ειδηναι εχρην, ὁτι ὡσπερ εσι νομος σκιαν περιεχων των μελλοντων αγαθων, ὑπο τη κατ' αληθειαν καταγγελλομενη νομω δηλωμενων, ουτω και ευαγγελιον σκιαν μυστηριων Χριστου διδασκει, τα νομιζομενα ὑπο παντων των εντυγχανοντων νοεισθαι. Ὁ δε φησιν Ιωαννης ευαγγελιον αιωνιον, οικειως αν λεχθησομενον πνευματικον, σαφως παρισησι τοις νοησι τα παντα ενωπιον περι αυτη τη ιδια του Θεου.——Διοπερ αναγκαιον πνευματικως και σωματικως χριστιανιζειν, και ὁπη μεν χρη το σωματικον κηρυσσειν ευαγγελιον, φασκοντα μηδεν ειδεναι τοις σαρκινοις η Ιησουν Χριστον και τουτον εσταυρωμενον, τουτο ποιητεον· επαν δε εὑρεθωσι κατηρτισμενοι τω πνευματι, και καρποφορουντες εν αυτω, ερωντες τε της ουρανιου σοφιας, μεταδοτεον αυτοις του λογου, επανελθοντος απο του σεσαρκωσθαι, εφ' ὁ ην εν αρχη προς τον Θεον. *Ibid*, p. 9. (*P.*)

Logos that was with him; but there are others who know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified, the *Logos* that was made flesh; thinking they have every thing of the *Logos* when they acknowledge Christ according to the flesh. Such is the multitude of those who are called Christians."*

Again, he says, "the multitude (*i. e.* the great mass or body) of believers are instructed in the shadow of the Logos, and not in the true logos of God, which is in the open heaven."†

These humble Christians of *Origen*, who got no further than the shadow of the *Logos*, and the *simplices* and *idiotæ* of *Tertullian*, were probably the *simplices credentium* of *Jerome*, who as well as the heretics, he says, "did not understand the Scriptures as became their majesty." For had these simple Christians, within the pale of the church, inferred from what *John* says of the *Logos* and from what Christ says of himself that he was, personally considered, equal to the Father, *Jerome* would hardly have said that they did not understand the Scriptures according to their majesty: for he himself would not pretend to a perfect knowledge of the mystery of the Trinity. "For these simple Christians," he says, "the earth of the people of God brought forth *hay*, as for the heretics it brought forth *thorns*."‡ For the intelligent, I suppose, it produced richer fruits.

From all these passages, and others quoted before, especially the *major pars credentium* of *Tertullian*, I cannot help inferring, that the doctrine of Christ being any thing more than a man, who was crucified and rose from the dead, (the whole doctrine of the incarnation of the eternal *Logos*, that was in God, and that was God,) was considered as a more abstruse and refined doctrine, with which there was no occasion to trouble the common people; and it is evident that this class of Christians was much staggered by it, and offended when they did hear of it. This could never have been the case if it had been supposed to be the doctrine of the apostles, and to have been delivered by them as the most

* Ούτω τοινυν οἱ μεν τινες μετεχησιν αυτε τε εν αρχῃ λογε και προς τον Θεον λογε, και Θεου λογε, ὡσπερ Ὡσηε και Ησαιας και Ιερεμιας, και ει τις ἑτερος τοιητον ἑαυτον παρεζησεν ὡς τον λογον κυριε, η τον λογον γενεσθαι προς αυτον· ἑτεροι δε οἱ μηδεν ειδοτες ει μη Ιησεν Χριζον και τετον εζαυρωμενον, τον γενομενον σαρκα λογον, το παν νομισαντες ειναι τε λογε Χριζον κατα σαρκα μονον γνωσκεσι τοιητον δε εζι το πληθος των πεπιζευκεναι νομιζομενων. "Comment. in Johan." II. pp. 48, 49. (*P.*)

† Τα δε πληθη των πεπιζευκεναι νομιζομενων τῃ σκιᾳ τε λογε, και ουχι τῳ αληθινῳ λογῳ Θεε εν τῳ ανεῳγοτι ουρανῳ τυγχανοντι, μαθητευεται. *Ibid.* p. 52. (*P.*)

‡ "Quod dicitur *super terram populi mei spinæ et fœnum ascendent*, referri potest et ad hæreticos, et ad simplices quosque credentium, qui non ita scripturam intelligunt ut illius convenit majestati. Unde singula singulis coaptavimus, ut terra populi Dei hæreticis spinas, imperitis quibusque ecclesiæ fœnum afferat." In *Is.* xxxii. 20, *Opera*, IV. p. 118. *(P.)*

essential article of Christian faith, in which light it is now represented. Such terms as *scandalizare*, *expavescere*, &c. used by *Tertullian*,* and ταραττειν by *Origen*,† can only apply to the case of some *novel* and *alarming* doctrine, something that men had not been accustomed to. In the language of Origen, it had been the *corporeal gospel* only, and not this *spiritual* and *mysterious* one, that they had been taught.‡

I am, &c.

LETTER IX.

Of the Light in which the Unitarians were considered in later Ages, and of the State of the Common People at all Times.

Rev. Sir,

It appears from what has been advanced in the preceding letters, that, whatever might be the opinion of the more learned Christians, and of course that of the *writers*, the bulk of the common people were not brought to a belief, or rather a profession, of the doctrine of the Trinity till a pretty late period; and that, if they did not of themselves leave the communion of the orthodox, and raised no disturbance in the church, they were connived at. In fact, they were considered by the more learned as simple, ignorant people, who knew no better, and who acquiesced in the doctrine of the simple *humanity* of Christ, because they were incapable of comprehending that of his *divinity*, and the sublime doctrine of *three persons in one God*. This must have been the case with the οἱ πολλοι, *the many*, or multitude, of *Athanasius*.

This writer, considering the violence of his character, speaks of the Unitarians with a good deal of tenderness on account of the difficulty of understanding the doctrine of the Trinity. In my former letters [p. 77] I quoted a passage from him in which he represents them as the οἱ πολλοι, *the many*, and persons of a low understanding, but by no means as persons out of the church. Contrasting them with the *Gnostics* and the *Arians*, he says, "Some persons considering what is human in Christ, seeing him thirsting, labouring, and suffering, and degrading him to a mere man, sin indeed greatly; but they may readily obtain forgiveness if they repent, alleging the weakness of the flesh; and they have

* See *supra*, pp. 19, 24.
† See *supra*, p. 109.
‡ See *Appendix*, No. IX.

the apostle himself administering pardon to them, and, as it were, holding out his hand to them, while he says, Truly, *great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh.*"*

According to him, many persons within the pale of the church must either have been Unitarians, or have believed the doctrine of the Trinity without understanding it; which in fact is no belief at all. Being consulted what was to be done with respect to the spread of the doctrine of *Paulus Samosatensis*, after acknowledging that persons of *low understandings* were chiefly infected with it, and quoting what Paul says of the *great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh*, he says, "those who understand the subject *accurately*, are few, but all pious persons may hold the faith delivered to them."† But what kind of *holding* must it be, when they had no perfect understanding of what they held?

Gregory Nazianzen also represents the common people as excusable for their errors, and safe, from not being disposed to scrutinize into things.‡

I have also observed many instances in writers so late as *Chrysostom*, who, notwithstanding the prevalence of a different mode of treating Unitarians, use the term *heretics* in its ancient and proper sense for the *Gnostics* only. Here I shall content myself with one from *Athanasius*. He says, "The heretics make to themselves another Maker of the universe besides the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."§ Indeed *Athanasius* considered the proper Unitarians, in a more favourable light than he did either the *Gnostics* or the *Arians*.‖

Cyril of Jerusalem complains of heretics, both *Unitarians* and *Arians*, in the bosom of the church. "Now," says he, "there is an apostacy; for men have departed from the faith, some confounding the Son with the Father, others

* Ὁταν τινες, εις τα ανθρωπινα βλεποντες, ιδωσι τον κυριον διψωντα, η κοπιωντα, η πασχοντα, και μονον φιλανθρωπευσιν ὡς κατ' ανθρωπου τη σωτηρος, ἁμαρτανουσι μεν μεγαλως· δυνανται δε ὁμως ταχεως μεταγινωσκοντες λαμβανειν συγγνωμην, εχοντες προφασιν την τη σωματος ασθενειαν· εχουσι γαρ και τον αποστολον συγγνωμην αυτοις νεμοντα, και οιονει χειρα αυτοις εν τῳ λεγειν εκτεινοντα, ὁτι και ὁμολογουμενως μεγα εστι το της ευσεβειας μυστηριον, Θεος εφανερωθη εν σαρκι. "In illud Evangelii Quicunque dixerit," &c. *Opera*, I. p. 975. (*P.*)

† Ὁτι την μεν ακριβειαν αυτης επιζητειν ολιγων εστι, την δε πιστιν κατεχειν ἁπαντων των προς τον Θεον ευπειθων. "De Incarnatione, contra P. Samosat." *Opera*, I. p. 592. (*P.*)

‡ Τοις μεν γαρ τη λαη ταχα αν και συγγινωσκοιμεν τουτο πασχουσιν, οὐς σωζει πολλακις το αβασανιστον. *Oratio* xxi. *Opera*, I. p. 388. (*P.*)

§ Οἱ δε απο των αιρεσεων αλλον ἑαυτοις αναπλαττοντι δημιουργον των παντων παρα τον πατερα τη κυριη ἡμων Ιηση Χριστη. "De Incarnatione," *Opera*, I. p. 55. (*P.*)

‖ See *Opera*, I. pp. 975, 977, 978. (*P.*)

daring to say that Christ was created out of nothing. Formerly heretics were open, but now the church is full of concealed heretics."* The more zealous of the orthodox bishops might do something more than complain, but in general it may be presumed that they did not trouble themselves about the matter.

Complaints of the spread of heresy, both that of the *Unitarians*, and that of the *Arians*, in *Asia Minor*, in the time of *Basil*, by himself and his contemporaries, are without end. Those opinions prevailed more especially among the *common people*, though many of the clergy were also infected; and what is remarkable, the malcontents complained loudly of his *innovations*, both with respect to ancient doctrines and ancient practices. For some time *Basil*, called *the Great*, was obliged to give way to the storm, and retire from his diocese, though this it seems was a dangerous step; for, according to him, unremitted vigilance was necessary to guard their flocks from seduction. "If any person," he says, "leave his diocese for the shortest time, he leaves the common people exposed."†

I think we may learn from *Facundus*, who wrote so late as the reign of *Justinian*, that in his time many of the common people were well known to consider Christ as a *mere man*, and yet were not disturbed on that account. As the passage in his writings from which I infer this is a pretty remarkable one, I shall cite it at full length. Speaking of the condemnation of *Theodorus*, in whose favour he is writing, he says, that "in condemning him they condemned all those who thought as he did, even though they afterwards changed their opinion.——What will they do with Martha, and then with Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, who were particularly attached to our Lord while he was upon earth? And yet both of them, first Martha and then Mary, are said to speak to him thus: *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died;* who, though they thought that he was the Son of God who was to come into the world, yet would they not have said *if thou hadst been here*, if they had believed him to be God omnipresent. They therefore only thought as Theodorus is said to have done, and were excommunicated along with him; and how many of this kind do we know,

* Νυν δε εστιν αποστασια· απεστησαν γαρ οἱ ανθρωποι της ορθης πιστεως, και οἱ μεν υἱοπατοριαν καταγγελλεσιν, οἱ δε τον Χριστον εξ ουκ οντων εις το ειναι παρενεχθεντα λεγειν τολμωσιν, και προτερον μεν ησαν φανεροι αἱρετικοι, νυν δε πεπληρωται ἡ εκκλησια κεκρυμμενων αἱρετικων. *Cyrilli Catech.* xv. p. 209. See also p. 5. (*P.*)

† Ει γαρ τις και προς το βραχυτατον της εκκλησιας αυτε αποστατη εκδοτος αφησει τους λαους τοις εφεδρευσι. *Basilii Epist.* lxx. *Opera*, III. p. 114. (*P.*)

by the writings of the apostles and evangelists there were at that time, and how many even now are there still in the common herd of the faithful, who, by only partaking in the holy mysteries, and by a simple observance of the commandments, we see pleasing God; when even the apostles themselves, the first teachers, only thought as those whom we see to be included in this condemnation of Theodorus!"*

The case is indeed the same in a greater or less degree, at all times and in all churches. Quiet people will generally be indulged in their own way of thinking; and they are only those that disturb others that are themselves disturbed.

Is it not well known that there are both *Arians* and *Socinians*, members of the Church of England, and even among the clergy themselves; and yet if they can reconcile it to their own minds to keep in communion with a Trinitarian Church, there are no attempts made to molest them. Zealous as the *heads* of the church are (from the archdeacons to the archbishops) for the purity of its tenets, they think proper to connive at these things; and so they did in an age more zealous than this. The excellent Mr. Firmin† was not only an avowed *Socinian*, and in communion with the Church of England, but in habits of intimacy with *Tillotson*, and some of the most distinguished churchmen of his time.

At present there are *Arian* and *Socinian* writers within the pale of your church; and yet I dare say it never occurred to any archdeacon, bishop, or archbishop, that it would be proper to excommunicate any of them for the part they have acted. Such a thing as this might not have passed so easily in the time of *Theodosius;* but even then I make no doubt but that persons who could content themselves without disturbing others, would not have been molested.

You and I are both agreed that persons who do not *bonâ*

* "Condemnaverunt omnes ab ipso in quem illum incidisse putant errore conversos.——Ubi quid agent de Martha et Maria, sororibus Lazari, qua familiari devotione ipsi domino dum hic in carne degerit adhæserunt? Et tamen utraque, id est, prius Martha, ac deinde Maria, legitur illi dixisse, Domine, si fuisses hic, frater meus non fuisset mortuus. Quæ licet crederent quod ipse esset filius Dei qui in mundum venisset, tamen non dicerent *si fuisses hic*, si eum cognoscerent sicut Deum, ubique esse præsentem. Eadem ergo sapuerunt quæ dicitur sapuisse Theodorus, et cum Theodoro simul anathematisatæ sunt. Et quantos vel eo tempore in evangeliis et apostolicis scriptis tales fuisse cognovimus? Quantos etiam nunc tales in grege fidelium, sola sanctorum mysteriorum participatione, et simplici præceptorum obedientia, placentes Deo vidimus; cum et ipsi primi pastores ejus Apostoli sic aliquando sapuerunt, quos omnes cum Theodoro vidimus in hoc anathemate condemnatos." *Pro Defensione trium Capitulorum*, L. x. C. vii. p. 162. (*P.*)

† See Vol. X. pp. 360, 361, *Note* †.

fide hold the acknowledged tenets of any church, (I mean such great and distinguished ones as those relating to *the object of worship,)* ought to withdraw themselves from it,* and not, by continuing in communion with it, to countenance its errors. But how many are there who do not see the thing in the same light, or whose habits and prejudices are such, that they cannot bring themselves to act as we think every principle of *honour*, as well as of *religion*, dictates! And yet I cannot agree with you, if you should say, that all such persons are hypocrites and insincere, doing what they themselves know and feel to be wrong. They have excuses which I doubt not satisfy their own minds, though they do not satisfy me. Great allowance, no doubt, is also to be made for the force of habit, and even for a natural timidity. There are many *Erasmuses* for one *Luther*, many Dr. *Clarkes* for one *Whiston*,† a name which, notwithstanding the weakness of his judgment in some things, ought never to be mentioned without respect, on account of his almost singular and unparalleled uprightness.

As to the *common people*, the *idiotæ* of *Tertullian*, we generally see that, as they are not innovators in doctrine, they go to public worship where they have been used to do, without any nice discrimination of what is transacted there; and the observation will generally apply to the bulk of the inferior clergy. When Henry VIII. reformed the Church of England, how many joined him in it who would never have declared themselves Dissenters from the Established Church! The church is now *Trinitarian;* but supposing that an *Arian* or *Socinian* parliament (which is a possible case in this inquisitive and fickle age) should change the established religion in that respect, how many do you think of the clergy (excepting those who possess the rank, the knowledge, and the zeal of *Archdeacons*, &c., and also those whom you would place in "the dregs of methodism,"‡) would become Dissenters, especially if, as was often the case in former times, they had no alternative but a prison with a good conscience, or their present emoluments without one? I rather think they would contrive to keep both, and soon make themselves perfectly easy in their new situation.

With respect to the *common people* in general, settled as you may think them to be in the doctrines of the Church of England, perpetually hearing of *three persons and one*

* See *supra*, p. 107, *Note.*

† See his *Historical Memoirs* of Dr. Clarke, Ed. 3, 1748, pp. 35—41.

‡ *Letters*, p. 62. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 160.

God, and daily making their responses to *the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity;* yet could they, without any preparation or discussion, hear Mr. Lindsey's reformed liturgy read to them by their usual ministers, and no *Archdeacon* should sound the alarm, but they were to take it for granted that all was done by order of their *superiors*, and therefore *right*, I dare say the peace of few parishes would be much disturbed by it.

These considerations, which are founded on such a knowledge of human nature as we may learn from all history and our own daily observation, may render it credible, that the majority of the common people, the *idiotæ* of *Tertullian*, though not the *idiots* of Dr. Horsley, might be Unitarians, and yet continue in communion with the church after its forms became Trinitarian, especially as they would not become so all at once. In the most ancient liturgies, you know, there were no prayers addressed to Christ; and as the members of Christian societies were not required to subscribe to any thing,* there was nothing that they were expected to *bear a part in*, concerning which they might not be able to satisfy themselves.

I am, &c.

LETTER X.

Of the Quotation from Athanasius.

Rev. Sir,

It is with very little effect, indeed, that you cavil at my quotation from *Athanasius*, and the defence I made of it. To every impartial reader it discovers how extremely averse the Jews were to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ; and, to borrow a word from you and Mr. Badcock, to what *management* the apostles were reduced in divulging this offensive doctrine to them. I have nothing to offer in addition to what I said on that subject, except that I have no objection to your rendering ευλογος αιτια, *a good reason*, instead of *a plausible pretence;* for I doubt not that it appeared a very good reason to Athanasius, who had nothing better to suggest.

Athanasius, however, by no means stands single in his view of the prejudices of the Jews, and of the conduct of

* In the times in which the doctrine of the Trinity was most agitated, some of the more zealous bishops proposed the *Nicene Creed* and other tests to those who were in communion with them; but even then this practice does not appear to have been general. (*P.*)

the apostles with respect to them. *Epiphanius*, as quoted above, [p. 163,] shews how prevalent the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ was at the time that *John* wrote. There are also passages in several of the fathers, and especially a great number in *Chrysostom*, by which we clearly perceive that their idea of the conduct of the apostles was precisely the same with that which I have ascribed to *Athanasius;* and as it is possible that, by a different kind of instinct, my *rapid glances* may have discovered more passages of this kind than have occurred to you, in the actual *reading* and *study* of all the authors, I shall here produce one of them from the Preface to his Commentaries on the *Book of Acts.*

After treating pretty largely of the conduct of the apostles with respect to their insisting on the doctrine of the *resurrection* of Christ, rather than that of his *divinity*, immediately after the descent of the Holy Spirit, he says, "As to the Jews, who had daily heard, and been taught out of the law, *Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord, and besides him there is no other;* having seen him (Jesus) nailed to a cross, yea, having killed and buried him themselves, and not having seen him risen again, if they had heard that this person was God, equal to the Father, would not they have rejected and spurned at it?" I want words in English to express the force of the Greek in this place. The Latin translator renders it *nonne maxime omnes ab his verbis abhorruissent, ac resilissent, et oblatrassent.* "On this account," he adds, "they (the apostles) brought them forwards gently, and by slow degrees, and used great art in condescending to their weakness."*

In how different a light do *Chrysostom* and you represent the same thing! According to you, the Jews were always fully persuaded that their *Messiah* was to be God, equal to the Father; and, therefore, after the apostles had persuaded them that Jesus was the Messiah, they had nothing to apprehend from their attachment to the doctrine of the unity of God, and had no occasion for any *art* or *management* with respect to it. However, their view of things, I doubt not, assisted *Athanasius*, *Chrysostom*, and others, who lived

* Πως δε αν Ιουδαιοι, οἱ καθ' ἑκαστην ἡμεραν μανθανοντες, και ενηχουμενοι ὑπο του νομου, Ακουε, Ισραηλ, Κυριος ὁ Θεος σου Κυριος εἱς εστιν, και πλην αυτου ουκ εστιν αλλος, επι ξυλου σταυρου ἱδοντες προσηλωμενην αυτον, μαλλον δε και σταυρωσαντες και θαψαντες, και ουδε αναστασιν θεασαμενοι, ακουοντες ὁτι Θεος εστιν αυτος οὑτος, και τῳ πατρι ισος, ουκ αν μαλιστα παντων απεπηδησαν τε και απερρᾳγησαν; Διατοι τουτο ηρεμα, και κατα μικρον, αυτους προσβιβαζησι, και πολλῃ μεν κεχρηνται τῃ της συγκαταβασεως οικονομιᾳ. *Chrysost.* in *Acta Apost. Hom.* 1, *Opera*, VIII. p. 447. (*P.*)

nearer to those times than the present Archdeacon of St. Alban's, to account for the great number of Unitarians among the early Jewish Christians; nor could they wonder at the same among the Gentiles, considering as *Athanasius* does, that they could only learn Christianity from the Jews; and it would have answered no end for the apostles to have spoken with caution to the Jews, and with openness to the Gentiles. Besides, according to *Chrysostom*, the Gentiles were not much better prepared to receive the doctrine of the divinity of Christ than the Jews themselves.

In the same passage, part of which I have quoted above, after observing that, if the apostles had not conducted themselves in this cautious manner with respect to the Jews, their whole doctrine would have appeared incredible to them, he adds, "and at Athens Paul calls him (Jesus) simply a *man*, and nothing further, and for a good reason. For if, when they had heard Christ himself speaking of his equality to the Father, they would, on that account, have often stoned him, and called him a blasphemer; they would hardly, therefore, have received this doctrine from fishermen, especially after speaking of him as crucified. And why do I speak of the Jews, when, at that time, even the disciples of Christ himself were often disturbed, and scandalized at him, when they heard sublime doctrines; on which account he said, I have many things to say to you, but ye are not yet able to bear them. And if they could not bear these things, who had lived so long with him, and had received so many mysteries, and seen so many miracles, how could men, from their altars, and idols, and sacrifices, and cats, and crocodiles; for such was the worship of the Heathens? But being first brought off from these abominations, they would readily receive their discourse concerning more sublime doctrines."*

* Εν δε Αθηναις, και ανθρωπον αυτον απλως καλει ὁ Παυλος, ουδε πλεον ειπων εικοτως· ει γαρ αυτον τον Χριστον διαλεγομενον περι της εις τον πατερα ισοτητος, λιθασαι πολλακις επεχειρησαν, και βλασφημον δια τουτο εκαλουν, σχολη γαρ αν παρα των ἁλιεων τουτον τον λογον εδεξαντο, και ταυτα του σταυρου προχωρησαντες. Και τι δει λεγειν τους Ιουδαιους; ὁπουγε και αυτοι τοτε πολλακις οἱ μαθηται των ὑψηλοτερων ακουοντες δογματων εθορυβουντο και εσκανδαλιζοντο· δια τουτο και ελεγε, Πολλα εχω λεγειν ὑμιν αλλ' ου δυνασθε βασταζειν αρτι. Ει δε εκεινοι ουκ εδυναντο οἱ συγγενομενοι χρονον τοσουτον αυτῳ, και τοσουτων κοινωνησαντες απορρητων, και τοσαυτα θεασαμενοι θαυματα, πως ανθρωποι απο βωμων, και ειδωλων, και θυσιων, και αιλουρων, και κροκοδειλων, τοιαυτα γαρ ην των Ἑλληνων τα σεβασματα και των αλλων των κακων τοτε πρωτον αποσπασθεντες, αθροον τους ὑψηλους των δογματων εδεξαντο λογους; In *Acta, Hom.* i. *Opera*, VIII. p. 447. *(P.)*

The latter part of the quotation will admit of a translation more favourable to my purpose, by introducing a parenthesis and a note of interrogation, as follows: "How could men who were then first taken from their altars, idols, &c., (for such was the worship of the Heathen,) and being then first brought off from these abominations readily receive sublime doctrines?" *(P.)* Appendix (No. III.) to *Letters*, Pt. ii. 1784.

But we find no trace of either *Jews* or *Gentiles* having received these sublime doctrines that *Chrysostom* alludes to, in the age of the apostles. Nay he himself represents the apostle *Paul* as obliged to use the same caution with respect to the Jews, when he wrote the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, which was so late as A. D. 62, about two years before his death. And if the body of the *Jewish* Christians were at that time Unitarians, can it be thought probable that they became Trinitarians soon afterwards? If the apostles themselves had not succeeded in this business, which required equal address and authority, who else can be supposed to have done it?

Chrysostom represents the apostle as beginning his Epistle to the *Hebrews* with saying, that "it was *God* who spake by the prophets, and by his Son, and not that *Christ* himself had spoken by them, because their minds were weak, and they were not able to bear the doctrine concerning Christ."* He even says, that "when he there speaks of Christ as above the angels, he still spoke of his humanity. See," says he, "his great *caution*, ορα την συνεσιν την πολλην, † the very expression used by *Athanasius* on a similar occasion, and which you think I have not rendered rightly, and have mistaken the sense of the passage, though *Beausobre;* the popish translator, and, I shall now add, Dr. Lardner, all understood it as I do.

It was the general opinion of the fathers, as may be learned from *Epiphanius* and *Jerome*, quoted above, that it was *John* who first preached the doctrine of the divinity of Christ explicitly; and that when *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke* wrote their gospels, the Christians in general, but more especially the Jews among them, were not prepared to receive a doctrine of such sublimity.

Chrysostom represents all the preceding writers of the *New Testament* as "children, who heard, but did not understand things, and who were busy about cheese-cakes and

* Και ὁρα τι συνετως αυτο ειρηκεν· ου γαρ ειπεν ὁ Θεος ελαλησε, καιτοιγε αυτος ην ὁ λαλησας, αλλ' επειδη ασθενεις αυτων ησαν αἱ ψυχαι, και ουδεπω ακουειν ηδυναντο τα περι τε Χριστε, φησιν ὁ Θεος δι' αυτε ελαλησεν. In *Heb.* cap. i. *Opera*, X. p. 1756, that is, "See how prudently he spoke: for he said God spake, though it was himself that spake; but because their minds were weak, and they were not able to bear the things concerning Christ, he says *God spake by him*." N.B. The ου in the second clause of this passage must be inserted by mistake for και, or some other particle, as it contradicts what is said in the close of the sentence, and the obvious sense of the whole. (*P.*) "The best editions read Χριστος for Θεος. See Horsley's Reply p. 34" (Mr. Belsham *Note*). See Horsley's *Tracts*, p. 359.

† *Opera*, X. p. 1755. (*P.*)

childish sports;* but *John*," he says, "taught what the angels themselves did not know before he declared it;"† and he represents them as his most attentive auditors.‡ "Leaving the Father," he says, "he *(John)* discoursed concerning the Son; because the Father was known to all, if not as a Father, yet as a God, but the only-begotten was unknown." §

Observing that *in the beginning was the Logos*, he says, "This was not preached immediately, for the world could not bear it. The evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John," (this last is inserted by some mistake,) "when they began the preaching, spake at a distance, and not immediately what became his dignity, but what was convenient for their hearers."‖

Of the three first evangelists, he says, that "they all treated of the fleshy dispensation, and silently, by his miracles, indicated his dignity. The dignity of the Logos of God was hid, the arrows against the heretics were concealed, and the fortification to defend the right faith was not raised by the pious preaching. John, therefore, the son of thunder, being the last, advanced to the doctrine of the Logos," or the divinity of Christ.¶

Austin writes to the same purpose: "And if there be any other things which, to those who rightly understand them, intimate the divinity of Christ, in which he is equal to the Father, John almost alone has given them in his gospel."**

* Οἱ γε ἀλλοι ἁπαντες, καθαπερ τα παιδια τα μικρα· ακεφσι μεν, οὐκ ισασι δε ἁπερ ακεφσιν, ἀλλα περι πλακεφτας επτοηνται, και αθυρματα παιδικα. In *Johan.* Prolog. *Opera*, VIII. p. 2. (*P.*)

† Ἀ μηδε ἀγγελοι πριν η τετον γενεσθαι ἠδεισαν· μεθ' ἡμων γαρ δη και οὑτοι δια της Ἰωαννε φωνης και δι' ἡμων εμαθον ἁπερ εγνωμεν. *Ibid.* (*P.*)

‡ *Ibid.* (*P.*)

§ Τι δηποτ' ουν τον πατερα αφεις, περι τε υἱε διαλεγεται· ὁτι εκεινος μεν δηλος ἁπασιν ην, εικαι μη ὡς πατηρ, ἀλλ' ὡς Θεος, ὁ δε μονογενης ηγνοειτο. *Ibid.* p. 11. (*P.*)

‖ Εν ἀρχῃ ὁ λογος. Ουκ ευθυς τετο εκηρυχθη· ου γαρ εχωρει ὁ κοσμος. Μακραν ἡμιν οἱ εναγγελισαι Ματθαιος, Μαρκος, Λεκας, και Ἰωαννης, ὁτε ἠρξαντο τε κηρυγματος ουκ ευθυς ελαλησαν τα πρεποντα τῃ ἀξιᾳ, ἀλλα τα ἁρμοζοντα τοις ακροωμενοις. *De Sigillis. Opera*, VI. p. 171. (*P.*)

¶ Παντες ουν εχωρησαν εις την της σαρκος οικονομιαν, και ἠρεμα πως, δια των θαυματων, εγνωριζον την ἀξιαν. Εκρυπτετο δε ετι τε Θεε λογε το ἀξιωμα. Εκρυπτετο δε τα κατα των αἱρετικων βελη, και το της ορθης δοξης επιτειχισμα ουδεποτε τῳ κηρυγματι της ευσεβειας εγγγερτο. Ἰωαννης τοινυν, ὁ υἱος της βροντης, τελευταιος, περιηλθεν επι την Θεολογιαν. *De Sigillis. Opera*, VI. p. 173. N.B. The sense of the passage absolutely requires εκρυπτετο and not εκηρυττετο in both the clauses, and in the latter it is so rendered by the *Latin* translator, though not in the former. The observation, that the first verses in the gospel of *John* are a refutation of all heresies is common with the fathers. No person, except one who is pretty well conversant with them, can imagine how often those verses occur in their writings. (*P.*)

** "Et si qua alia sunt, quæ Christi divinitatem, in qua æqualis est Patri, recte intelligentibus intiment, pene solus Joannes in evangelio suo posuit." *Austin*, "de Consensu Evangelistarum." *Opera*, IV. p. 374. (*P.*)

Theodoret observes, that, in the genealogy of Christ given by *Matthew*, this writer did not add *according to the flesh*, "because the men of that time would not bear it;" evidently meaning, that they would thereby have been led into a suspicion that in the idea of the writer he had some higher origin, and would have been offended at it; but the apostle Paul, he says, could not avoid that expression, in his Epistle to the Romans. He adds, that, "before his death, not only to the other Jews, but to the apostles themselves, he did not appear as a God, nor did his miracles lead them to form that opinion of him."* This writer also says that the apostle Paul, in mentioning the subjection of Christ to the Father, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, "spake of him more lowly than was necessary, on account of their weakness."†

And yet you, Sir, who have no doubt read, considered, and re-considered, all these passages, and many more than I can produce to the same purpose, can say, "The desire of instructing the Jews, not the fear of offending them, was the motive with the apostles for propounding first what was the easiest to be understood, and the most likely to be admitted;" ‡ and even add, you cannot read without astonishment, that I should suppose that *Athanasius* meant to intimate that they were afraid of giving offence to the Jews.

When we consider how late the three first gospels were written, the last of them not long before that of *John*, which was near, if not after the destruction of Jerusalem, and that, in the opinion of these writers above-mentioned, all this caution and reserve had been necessary on the part of the Christian teachers, how is it possible that, in their idea, the Christian church in general should have been well established in the belief of our Lord's divinity? It could only have been great and open zeal on the part of the apostles, and not the *caution* and *management* which these writers ascribe to them, that could have effectually taught a doctrine which, according to them, they were ill prepared to receive; and the history of both *Peter* and *Paul* sufficiently proves, that the influence of mere apostolical authority was not so great at that time as many persons now take it to have been. Whatever powers they had, they were not considered as *lords over the faith of Christians.*

The Christians of that age required something more than

* Προ μεν τε ςαυρε και τε παθες, ὁ δεσποτης Χριςος ου μονον τοις αλλοις Ιεδαιοις, αλλα και αυτοις αποςολοις ουκ εδοκει ειναι Θεος—και ουδε τα θαυματα αυτες προς ταυτην επωθηγει την δοξαν. In *Rom.* L. iv. *Opera*, III. p. 11. (*P.*)

† 1 *Cor.* xv. *Opera*, III. p. 201. (*P.*) ‡ *Letters*, p. 93. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 197.

the private opinion of an apostle. They required some supernatural evidence that his doctrine was from God; and we have no account of the apostles proposing to them this article of faith, and alleging any such evidence for it. *Chrysostom* says, that "if the Jews were so much offended at having a new law superadded to their former, how much more would they have been offended if Christ had taught his own divinity!" May it not be supposed, therefore, that they would have required as particular evidence of a divine revelation in the one case as in the other? And what remarkably strong evidence was necessary to convince them that the obligation of their law did not extend to the *Gentiles?* Would they, therefore, have received what *Chrysostom* considered as the more offensive doctrine of the two, without any pretence to a particular revelation on the subject?

It may be said that all the caution of which we have been speaking was necessary with respect to the *unbelieving Jews only*, into whose hands these gospels and the other writings of the *New Testament* might fall. But how impossible must it have been to conceal from the *unbelieving Jews* the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, if it had been a favourite article with the *believing Jews!* If this had been the case, it could not but have been known to all the world; and therefore all the offence that it could have given would have been unavoidable. So that this supposed caution of the evangelists, &c., would have come too late, and would have answered no purpose whatever.

This caution, therefore, must necessarily have respected those persons into whose hands the gospels, &c., were most likely to come, and who would give the most attention to them; and these were certainly the *believing* Jews, and the Christian world at large, and not *unbelievers* of any nation. And we are authorized to conclude, that in the opinion of the writers who have spoken of it, of whatever weight that opinion may be, this caution in divulging the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was necessary with respect to the great body of Christians themselves, and especially the *Jewish* Christians. Consequently, they must have supposed that, at the time of these publications, which was about A. D. 64, the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was not generally held by Christians, and that there would have been danger of giving them great offence if it had been plainly proposed to them by the apostles themselves. At this time, therefore,

it may be inferred, that, in the opinion of these writers, the Christian church was principally *Unitarian*, believing only the simple humanity of Christ, and knowing nothing of his divinity or pre-existence.

From the acknowledgment which these orthodox fathers could not help virtually making, (for certainly they would not do it unnecessarily any more than yourself,) that there were greater numbers of proper Unitarians in the age of the apostles, it seems not unreasonable to conclude that there were great numbers of them in the age immediately following, and in their own; and their knowledge of this might be an additional reason for the opinion that they appear to have formed of that prevalence in the apostolic age. Would those fathers have granted to their enemies spontaneously, and contrary to truth, that the Jews were strongly prepossessed against the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and that the *Unitarians* were a formidable body of Christians while the apostles were living, if it had been in their power to have denied the facts? The consequence of making these acknowledgments is but too obvious, and must have appeared so to them, as well as it now does to you, which makes you so unwilling to make it after them.

You say that the Unitarian Jews, mentioned by *Athanasius*, were not Christians, and that the *Gentiles*, to whom they taught the doctrine of the humanity of the *Messiah*, were mere Heathen *Greeks*. "Have you forgotten, Sir," you say, "have you never known, or would you deny what is not denied by candid infidels, that the expectation of a great deliverer or benefactor of mankind was universal even in the Gentile world about the time of our Lord's appearance."* This, however, I do very much question, and I should be glad to know the names of the candid infidels who have acknowledged it.

An expectation of a *Messiah* certainly existed among the *Jews*, and of course among their proselytes; but if any such idea had been universal among the *Gentiles*, so as to interest them in discussions about the nature of this great deliverer, as whether he was to be God or man, &c., we should certainly have perceived some traces of it in their writings. It might have been expected that, on account both of the interesting nature and of the obscurity of the subject, there would have been different opinions about it; that it would

* *Letters*, p. 97. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 202.

have been a common topic in their philosophical schools; and that their historians would have given some account of the origin and foundation of this universal opinion.

You will produce, I suppose, *Virgil's* sixth eclogue. But, Sir, can you believe that even *Virgil* himself really expected any such person as he describes? The use that the poets might make of a vague report of a prophecy, brought probably from the East, and ultimately from the Jewish Scriptures, (but seriously believed by no person that we know of), merely to embellish a poem, is one thing; but the actual and universal expectation of such a person is another.

I am, &c.

LETTER XI.

Of the Time when Christ began to be considered as God, and the Opinion of the Ancient and Modern Jews with respect to the Messiah.

REV. SIR,

I TOOK the liberty to request that you would endeavour to fix the time when the apostles and primitive Christians began to consider Christ as God, or even the maker of the world under God; taking it for granted that at the first they supposed him to be a mere man. This, I thought no person living would have denied. That the Jews expected only a man for their *Messiah*, is clearly supposed by *Justin Martyr* and all the Christian fathers. The Jews of their time were perpetually objecting to the Christian doctrine on account of their making Christ to be a God, and I have no doubt but that the expectation of the Jews at this day is the same with that of their ancestors two thousand years ago.

You, Sir, have, however, ventured to deny all this. Speaking of the apostles, you say, that "from their first acknowledgment of our Lord as the Messiah, they equally acknowledged his divinity. The Jews," you say, "in Christ's day had notions of a Trinity in the Divine nature. They expected the second person, whom they called the Logos, to come as the Messiah.* For the proof of these

* On this subject the opinion of the fathers is unanimous, and against Dr. Horsley. They say, indeed, that the doctrine of the Trinity may be proved from the Old Testament, but that it was delivered so obscurely on account of the proneness of the Jews to idolatry, that they did not understand it. Theodoret says, Επειδη γαρ Εβραιοις εγραφεν, οἱ μονον τιμαν εἰωθασι τον πατερα, αναγκαιως το δι' αυτο προστεθεικε· *i. e.* "The Jews had been accustomed to worship the Father only, and for that reason the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews was obliged to say, *By him let us offer sacrifices to God continually.*" In *Heb.* *Opera*, III. p. 461. (*P.*)

assertions I refer you to the work of the learned Dr. Peter Allix, entitled, The *Judgment of the Ancient Jewish Church against the Unitarians;* a work which, it is to be hoped, Sir, you will carefully *look through*, before you send abroad your intended View of the Doctrine of the First Ages concerning Christ."*

When my stock of amusement from the writings of Bishop Bull is exhausted, which is by no means the case at present, I may perhaps throw away a few shillings on this Dr. Allix.† In the mean time, without entering into a large discussion on the subject, I shall only ask you a question or two relating to it, and you may answer me out of Dr. Allix if you please. Inform me, then, if you can, how our Saviour could possibly, on your idea, have puzzled the Jewish doctors as he did, reducing them to absolute silence by asking them how *David* could call the *Messiah* his Lord, when he was his son or descendant.‡ For if they had themselves been fully persuaded, as you suppose, that the *Messiah*, though carnally descended from David, was in fact the maker and the God of David, and of them all, a very satisfactory answer was pretty obvious. Or, without asking any other question of my own, what say you to *Facundus*, quoted above, [p. 202,] who says, that "Martha and Mary would never have said to Christ, *If thou hadst been here*, had they thought him to be God omnipresent." He adds, "neither would Philip have said to him *Shew us the Father*, if he had entertained any such idea of him."

Facundus also says, that the Jews always had expected, and in his time did expect, a mere man for their *Messiah*. "They did not know," he says, "that Christ, the Son of God, was God, but they thought that Christ would be a mere man, which any one may perceive that the Jews at this time also think."§

I am willing, however, to consider a few of the things which you have advanced in order to give some degree of plausibility to this strange hypothesis. "So far," you say, "as they" (the apostles) "believed in Jesus as the Messiah,

* *Letters*, pp. 107, 109. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 213, 216.

† Some account of Dr. Allix's opinion, and also of the confutation of it by *Prideaux* and *Capellus*, may be seen in Mr. Lindsey's *Apology*, p. 88, *Note*. (*P.*) Ch. iii. Ed. 4. 1782, pp. 102, 103. See *Prideaux* (Pt. ii. B. viii.), Ed. 2, 1749, IV. pp. 783, 784.

‡ See *Matt.* xxii. 45, Vol. XIII. p. 290.

§ "Sed non propterea Christum Dei filium, Deum sciebant; hominem autem purum arbitrati sunt Christum.—Quod etiam nunc putantes Judæos quilibet videbit." L. ix. C. iii. p. 139. (*P.*)

in the same degree they understood and acknowledged his divinity. The proof which I have to produce of this from holy writ consists of too many particulars to be distinctly enumerated in the course of our present correspondence. I shall mention two, which to any but a decided Unitarian will be very striking; Nathaniel's first profession, and Peter's consternation at the miraculous draught of fishes. It was in Nathaniel's very first interview with our Lord that he exclaimed, 'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God! thou art the King of Israel!' and this declaration was drawn from Nathaniel by some particulars in our Lord's discourse, which he seems to have interpreted as indications of omniscience. When Simon Peter saw the number of fishes taken at a single draught, when the net was cast at our Lord's command, after a night of fruitless toil, 'he fell down at the knees of Jesus, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' Peter's consternation was evidently of the same sort of which we read in the worthies of earlier ages, upon any extraordinary appearance of the light of the Shechinah, which was founded on a notion that a sinful mortal might not *see God and live.*"*

With respect to *Nathaniel's* calling Jesus the *Son of God*, [*John* i. 49,] this phrase was, in the mouth of a Jew, synonymous to the *Messiah*, or *Son of David*, and it is fully explained by the subsequent expression of Nathaniel himself, viz. *King of Israel;* and, therefore, the Jewish doctors, expecting nothing more in their Messiah than a glorious *King of Israel*, such as David had been, could not give any satisfactory reason why David should call him *Lord*, having no notion of his spiritual kingdom extending to all mankind. If the mere appellation *Son of God*, implies *equality with God*, Adam must have been a God, for he is called the Son of God, *Luke* iii. 38. *Solomon* also must have been God; and so must all Christians, for they are called *Sons of God*, 1 *John* iii. 2; *John* i. 12; *Rom.* viii. 14; *Phil.* ii. 15.

As you are so intimately acquainted with the fathers, you must have known the construction that *Chrysostom* puts upon the language of *Nathaniel;* and as he was unquestionably orthodox, I should have thought that it might have had some weight with you. He says, that "in this speech Nathaniel confessed Christ as a man, as appears by his adding, *Thou art the King of Israel.*"†

* *Letters*, p. 107. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 214.
† In *Johan. Opera*, VIII. p. 106. *(P.)*

As to what you call *omniscience*, you will hardly say it was a greater degree of knowledge than it is in the power of God to impart to a man. After our Saviour had performed what you, I suppose, will call an act of *omnipotence*, all the conclusion that the spectators drew from it was, that God "had given such power unto men." *Matt.* ix. 8. They did not infer from it that he himself was God, or pretended to be God;* and yet they probably thought that he was the *Messiah*.

As to the consternation of *Peter*, I should imagine that by the same mode of interpretation you might conclude that the widow of *Zarephath* took *Elijah* to be a God; for, on the death of her son, she said, 1 *Kings* xvii. 18, "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" Pray, Sir, why might not the exclamation of *Peter* be considered as being of the same nature with that of this woman?† The language is very similar, and I will not answer for it, but that you, not being a decided *Unitarian*, may really be of opinion, that she took the prophet to be God incarnate.

Your proof of the doctrine of the Trinity, from a verse in the first sermon of *Peter* on the day of *Pentecost*, is particularly curious. It is as follows: *Acts* ii. 33: Jesus "being by the right-hand of God, exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, has shed forth this," &c. "I shall maintain," you say, "that the three persons are distinctly mentioned, in a manner which implies the divinity of each."‡ Well may you say, "Thus I will ever reason for the edification of my own flock, but with little hope of your conviction, from St. Peter's first sermon."§

Indeed, Sir, I see nothing in this passage but as perfect a dependence of Christ upon God as any man can have. Why should Christ receive the Holy Spirit from the Father, according to a preceding promise, if he had been as much in the power of the Son as of the Father? And why must the Holy Spirit be so much at the absolute disposal of either of them, if he was God in his own right, and of course independent, as much as the Father himself?

The Father, you say, is distinguished from the Son by not being called God in this place. "Paternity is the

* See Vol. XIII. p. 103.
† See *Luke* v. 8, Vol. XIII. pp. 66, 67.
‡ *Letters*, p. 101. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 207.
§ *Letters*, p. 102. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 207, 208.

property which individuates the person. But from whom is the first principle distinguished? From his creatures? From them he were more significantly distinguished by the name of *God*."* But, Sir, to adopt your own language, have you forgot, or did you never learn, that we, who are mere mortal men, are taught to address God by the appellation of *Father*, as well as that Christ himself prayed to God by the same title? What weight, then, is there in the argument that you draw from this circumstance? Indeed, Sir, you must be happy in a very tractable flock, if such provision as this will satisfy them. You would make a sad exchange of your flock for mine. If such arguments do not of themselves expose a cause, I do not know what can do it. It is well for your cause that it has other supports besides *arguments*.

Considering the case of *Stephen*,† which is your capital argument for the worship of Jesus Christ, you say, "What could be the blasphemy against God?" (With which he was charged.) "What was there in the doctrine of the apostles which could be interpreted as blasphemy against God, except it was this, that they ascribed the divinity to one who had suffered publicly as a malefactor?" You therefore say, "I shall always insist that the blessed Stephen died a martyr to the DEITY of Christ."‡ As you have formed this resolution, it would be presumption in me to imagine that I could change it, and perhaps all your opinions are as fixed as the laws of the *Medes* and *Persians*. Otherwise I might suggest that to a Jew, blasphemy against *Moses*, by whom God spake, would naturally be considered as blasphemy against the God by whom he spake; on the same principle as our Saviour says, *Matt.* x. 40, "He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me."

Besides, we are expressly told what was the *blasphemy* with which *Stephen* was charged, *Acts* vi. 11—13, viz. "against Moses and against God,—against this holy place and the law;" and this is fully explained as follows (*ver.* 14): "For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us."§ This was the whole of the accusation, very clearly stated, and where do you find any thing said concerning the *Deity of Christ?*

* *Letters*, p. 207. † *Acts* vii. 59. See Vol. XIII. p. 415.
‡ *Letters*, p. 102. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 208. § See Vol. XIII. p. 408.

I shall consider another of your curious arguments. You say, "I shall particularly desire them" (that is, your gentle flock above-mentioned) "to remark, that it is said of our Lord Jesus, that 'it was not possible that he should be holden of death.' The expressions clearly imply a *physical impossibility.*"* But as we read that *it is impossible for God to lie*, it may be said that as God had foretold the resurrection of Christ, it was impossible but that it must take place. As to a proper *natural impossibility*, the fact is clearly against you; for if it had been naturally impossible for him to be *holden of death*, it must certainly have been naturally impossible for him to have died at all; and if death could hold him *three days*, it might, for any thing which appears *in nature*, have held him *for ever*, if the Divine power, a power foreign to himself, had not interposed. Accordingly we read, not that he raised himself, but that *God raised him from the dead.* Use, no doubt, will reconcile the minds of men to strange conceptions of things, and strange language; or I should wonder that you should not be shocked at the idea of *God's dying.* For when you speak of the natural impossibility of Christ's being holden of death, you must certainly have an idea of something more than the death of *his body.*

You, Sir, suppose that our Lord's disciples might have conversed with him as familiarly as they did, and have taken the liberties with him which they sometimes did (as when *Peter* rebuked him for complaining of being touched in a crowd, &c. &c.,†) and yet have considered him as their God and Maker. You say, "The most that could be inferred, were the assumption true, would be something strange in their conduct; and even this might be a hasty inference. The singularity of their conduct might disappear if the accounts which they had left of our Lord's life on earth, and of their attendance upon him, were more circumstantial. But the truth is, that the foundations of this argument are unsound." After mentioning instances in which you think "they invoke him as a Deity," you say, "If the angels Michael or Gabriel should come and live among us in the manner which you suppose,‡ I think we should soon lose our habitual recollection of their angelic nature. It would be only occasionally awakened by extraordinary incidents. This, at least, would be the case if they mixed with us upon an *even footing*, without assuming any badges of distinction,

* *Letters*, p. 101. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 207.
† See *Mark* v. 31; *Luke* viii. 45; Vol. XIII. p. 106.
‡ See *supra*, p. 103.

wearing a common garb, partaking of our lodging, and of our board, suffering in the same degree with ourselves from hunger and fatigue, and seeking the same refreshments. The wonder would be if angels, in this disguise, met with any other respect than that which dignity of character commands, and something of occasional homage when their miraculous help was needed. This was the respect which our Lord met with from his followers."*

To this, I can only say, that I am really astonished how you can entertain the idea of any number of persons living on this *even footing*, as you call it, with a being whom they actually believed to be the Maker of themselves, and of all things, even the eternal God himself. Certainly, Sir, you never attempted to realize the idea, or even thought of putting yourself in their place, so as to have imagined yourself introduced into the actual presence of your Maker, in the form of man, or any other form whatever. You must have been overwhelmed with the very thought of it; or if *you* should have had the courage and unparalleled self-possession to bear such a thing, must there not have been numbers who would have been filled with consternation at the very idea, or the mere *suspicion*, of the person they were speaking to being really God? And yet we perceive no trace of any such consternation and alarm in the gospel history, no mark of astonishment in the disciples of our Lord in consequence of the belief of it, and no marks of indignation or exclamation of blasphemy, &c., against those who disbelieved it.

I am surprised to find how very differently you think from your *holy father* Athanasius on this subject. He says, "I will venture to say, that the blessed disciples themselves had no perfect persuasion concerning his divinity, till the descent of the spirit at Pentecost."†

Chrysostom frequently observes that Christ only intimated his divinity obscurely, and left the full discovery of it to his apostles. Thus, he says, that he himself never said plainly that he made the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and all things visible and invisible.‡ And why," says he, "do you

* *Letters*, p. 143. *(P.)* *Tracts*, pp. 256—258.

† Τολμω γαρ λεγειν ὁτι ουδε αυτοι οἱ μακαριοι αυτω μαθηται το τελειον περι της αυτη θεοτητος ειχον φρονημα, ἑως το πνευμα το ἁγιον αυτοις τη πεντακοστη επεφοιτησεν. "De Communi Essentia." *Opera*, I. p. 237. *(P.)*

‡ Ὁτι ουρανον, και γην, και θαλατταν αυτος εποιησε, και τα ὁρωμενα, και τα αορατα παντα, αυτος μεν ουδαμη σαφως ειρηκεν. In *Matt.* Cap. v. *Hom.* 16. *Opera*, VII. p. 154. *(P.)* See Vol. XIII. p. 99, *Note* †.

wonder that others should have said greater things of him than he has said of himself, when he explained many things by actions, but never clearly in words? That he made man, he shewed clearly enough, as by the blind man; but when he was discoursing about the formation of the first man, he did not say, *I made them*, but *he that made them*, made them male and female. And that he made the world he signified by the fishes, by the wine, by the loaves, &c., but never clearly in words."* He even says, "it was more necessary to be concealed from his disciples, because they would immediately have told every thing through an excess of joy."†

"Christ," he says, "did not reveal his divinity immediately; but was first thought to be a prophet, and the Christ, simply a man; and it afterwards appeared by his works and his sayings what he really was."‡

There is one important circumstance relating to this subject, of which you have taken no notice at all, which is this: If the apostles had really preached the doctrine of the divinity of Christ from the first, and, consequently, it had always been the belief of the Christian church, the unbelieving Jews must have heard of it. Would they not, therefore, have objected to it as loudly as they did in the times of the Christian fathers, and as they do at this day? How is it, then, that neither in the *Acts of the Apostles*, nor in any of the *Epistles*, we find the least trace of any such objection, the least notice of it, or the most distant reference to it, by those who were concerned to answer it? The most probable conclusion from this fact is, that no such offence had been given to the Jews, the apostles not having preached any such doctrine.§

With respect to the time when our Saviour's disciples began to consider him as God, you say, that I am the person most concerned to find the solution.‖ I told you in my former letters that I had solved the difficulty to my own

* Και τι θαυμαζεις ει ἑτεροι μειζονα περι αυτου ειρηκασιν ὡν αυτος ειρηκεν· ὁπου γε πολλα δια των πραγματων επιδεικνυμενος δια των ῥηματων σαφως ουκ ελεγεν; ὁτι γαρ τον ανθρωπον αυτος εποιησεν εδειξε σφαως και δια του τυφλου· ηνικα δε περι της εν αρχῃ πλασεως ὁ λογος ην αυτῳ, ουκ ειπεν ὁτι εγω εποιησα, αλλ' ὁ ποιησας αρσεν και θηλυ εποιησεν αυτους. Παλιν, ὁτι τον κοσμον εδημιουργησε και τα εν αυτῳ, δια των ιχθυων, δια του οινου, δια των αρτων·—ῥημασι ουδαμου τουτο σαφως ειπεν. In *Matt.* C. v. *Hom.* 16. *Opera*, VII. p. 154. (*P.*)

† Εδει γαρ τους λανθανειν, και μαλιστα επι των μαθητων· και γαρ εκ πολλης ἡδονης παντα αν εκηρυξαν. In *Matt.* C. viii. *Hom.* 28. *Opera*, VII. p. 274. (*P.*)

‡ Ου γαρ ευθεως ἡμιν ἑαυτον την θεοτητα εξεκαλυψεν· αλλα πρωτον μεν νομιζετο ειναι προφητης, και Χριστος, ἁπλως ανθρωπος, ὑστερον δε εφανη, δια των εργων και των ῥηματων, τουτο ὁπερ ην. In *Johan.* C. i. *Hom.* 2. *Opera*, VIII. p. 20. (*P.*)

§ See *Watts*, (while a *Trinitarian*,) quoted in Vol. XIII. pp. 97, 99, *Notes* †.

‖ *Letters*, p. 99. *(P.)* "It is your concern, not mine," says Dr. Horsley, "to seek the solution." *Tracts*, p. 205.

perfect satisfaction in my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity;* where I shewed by what steps the idea of the divinity of Christ was introduced. I did it upon my own *hypothesis*, of its not being an original doctrine, but a corruption of Christianity; and I challenged you to give as probable an account of its introduction, on the idea of its being no corruption, but a genuine doctrine, revealed at some time or other by Christ to the apostles, and by the apostles to the body of Christians. But, according to you, it required no revelation at all. The whole Jewish nation were prepared to receive their *Messiah*, as their God, and immediately to worship him accordingly.

I have no doubt, however, but that the Jews in our Saviour's time expected a man in the character of the *Messiah.* Mary, his mother, evidently expected that he would even be born in the usual way of two human parents; for when the angel informed her, (*Luke* i. 31,) that she should "conceive—and bring forth a son," who should "be called the son of the Highest," to whom God would "give the throne of his father David," she replied, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?"* The apostles evidently appear to me to have considered him as no other than a man, and they taught no other doctrine after our Saviour's death. We perceive no trace of it in the book of *Acts;* and *Athanasius*, *Chrysostom*, and others of the fathers, only pretend that they taught it with *caution*, so as not to give much alarm, till *John* published it in his gospel.

Upon the whole, it appears, that the *Jews* who led the *Gentiles* into the belief of the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ, were, according to *Athanasius*, Christian Jews, and that their proselytes were Christian Gentiles. It is perfectly ridiculous to suppose that the question could be interesting to any others. It also must have been the certain knowledge of great bodies of *Unitarians*, Jews and Gentiles, in the earliest times, that led these fathers to this *hypothesis*, to account for the fact. But that the great body of Jewish Christians should be Unitarians in the time of the apostles, without their having learned that doctrine from the apostles, is a thing that I cannot conceive. Moreover, it does not appear that the apostles took any umbrage at the prevailing doctrine, but connived at it; and all the indignation they expressed against *any* opinions, was against those of the Judaizing teachers and the *Gnostics.*

* *Luke* i. 34. See Vol. XIII. p. 17.

If the apostles did themselves really believe the doctrine of the Trinity, they must at least have had no high idea of its *importance*, or they could never have been such tame spectators of the spread of the Unitarian doctrine among their countrymen, and from them, according to *Athanasius*, among the Gentiles. How would Bishop Bull and the Archdeacon of St. Alban's have written if they had been in the situation in which *Epiphanius* and all the fathers place the apostle *John* when he wrote his epistle? Would they have contented themselves with condemning the dangerous tenets of the *Unitarians* in no more than one clause of a single sentence, which likewise contains the condemnation of the *Gnostics?* Would they not have thought the Unitarian the more dangerous heresy of the two; and therefore have bent their chief force against it?

It is remarkable, however, and really curious, that before the Unitarians were considered as heretics, we find a very different account of the reasons that induced *John* to write both his epistles and his gospel; *Ignatius* says it was solely with a view to the *Gnostics*, and so does *Irenæus*, again and again. This, therefore, was the more ancient opinion on the subject; and I doubt not, the true one. And it was not till long after this, *(Tertullian*, I believe, is the first in whom it occurs,) that it was imagined that the apostle had any view to the Unitarians in any of his writings. This is a circumstance that well deserves to be attended to.

You imagine, Sir, what appears very extraordinary indeed to me, that the Jews will be easily reconciled to the doctrine of the Trinity, and will even more readily embrace Christianity on the *Trinitarian* than on the *Unitarian* principle. "For the Jews," you say, "whenever they begin to open their eyes to the evidences of our Saviour's mission, they will still be apt to consider the New Testament in connexion with the Old. They will look for an agreement in principle, at least, between the gospel and the law. When they accept the Christian doctrine, it will be as a later and a fuller discovery. They will reject it if they consider it to be contradictory to the patriarchal and the Mosaic revelations. Successive discoveries of divine truth may differ, they will say, in fulness and perspicuity, but in principle they must harmonize, as parts of one system. They will retain some veneration for their traditional doctrines; and in their most ancient Targums, as well as in allusions in their sacred books, they will find the notion of one godhead in a Trinity of persons, and they will perceive that it was in contradic-

tion to the Christians that the later Rabins abandoned the notions of their forefathers. The Unitarian scheme of Christianity is the last, therefore, to which the Jews are likely to be converted, as it is the most at enmity with their ancient faith."*

So different, Sir, are your ideas and mine on this subject, that one would think we had never read the same authors, or lived in the same world. Our different views of things must have arisen from the different influences to which our minds have been exposed; but where you have been, or with whom you have lived, I cannot trace. Who those *later Rabins* were who abandoned the notion of their fathers, and from expecting the *Messiah* to be God, adopted the idea of his being a mere man, (a process which I should think not very natural,) I cannot find. Late as they are, they must have been earlier than *Justin Martyr;* and, indeed, of this memorable *change of opinion*, on so fundamental a subject, I find no trace whatever. Really, Sir, one cannot read such a shameful perversion and absolute *making* of ancient history, with respect to this doctrine concerning the *Messiah*, as well as to the church of Jerusalem, without a mixture of contempt and indignation.

I shall content myself on this subject with appealing to two testimonies; one of them is that of *Basnage*, and the other of later date.

Basnage, I suppose, you will allow, had sufficiently studied the history and opinions of the Jews. He has written largely on the subject; and yet, though a Trinitarian himself, he has exploded all the pretences of *Cudworth* and others to find the doctrine of the Trinity either among the ancient or the modern Jews.

"The Christians and the Jews," he says, "separate at the second step in religion; for, after having adored together one God absolutely perfect, they find the moment after the abyss of the *Trinity*, which entirely separates them. The Jew considers *three persons* as *three Gods*, and this *tritheism* shocks him. The Christian who believes the unity of one God, thinks that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, should all be called God, and have the same worship. It is impossible to reconcile opinions so contrary. There are, however, divines bold enough to attempt it."† You, Sir, are one of

* *Letters*, p. 151. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 265.

† "Les Chrétiens s'écartent des Juifs des le second pas qu'ils font dans la religion. Car apres avoir adoré ensemble un Dieu, souverainement, parfait, ils trouvent un moment apres l'abîme de la trinité, qui les sépare, et les éloigne souverainement. Le Juif regarde trois personnes comme trois dieux, et ce trithéisme lui fait horreur.

those *bold divines*, or, if not bold yourself, at least a follower of the bold.

This writer also says, that the "Jews consider themselves as bearing their testimony to the unity of God among all the nations of the world."* Deny these facts if you can. What *ought*, or *ought not* to offend the Jews, is not the question. The doctrine of the Trinity does, in fact, and from the time that it was started always did offend the whole body of the Jews, and is, no doubt, one of the greatest obstacles to their conversion.

My second testimony I shall give in the Postscript of a Letter from a correspondent in the West of England,† in the year 1774, containing the opinion of a learned Jew, whom we may presume to be now living, and in this country. At that time he must have been in the neighbourhood of Barnstable, in Devonshire. An event which then gave me much concern, occasioned the discontinuance of my correspondence with the writer of that letter; and though desirous of knowing the issue of the business, I have not learned it. If this publication should be the means of bringing me acquainted with it, I shall think myself happy. If the learned Jew himself should meet with these letters, I shall be very glad to hear from him, whatever may be his present thoughts on the subject. In the mean time I would recommend it to you, Mr. Archdeacon, to inquire of any Jews now living, and not to argue from *suppositions*, when *facts* are within your reach.

My correspondent's Postscript is as follows: "I have lent your *Institutes* to a sensible and religious Rabbi, bred at the university of Halle. He has read them with great care, and taken curious extracts from them. The clergyman of this parish warned him of the danger of your works, and abused me for lending them to a Jew. The latter had

Le Chrétien, qui croit l'unité d'un Dieu, veut à même tems qu'on donne ce titre au Père, au Fils, au Saint Esprit, et qu'on les adore. Il est impossible de concilier des opinions si contraires; cependant il y a des theologiens hardis, qui ont tenté de le faire." *Hist. des Juifs.* L. iv. C. iii. Sect. i. *(P.)*

Dr. Addison describes the Jews as "malitious and blind in the utter denyal of the blessed Trinity," which, says he, "they look upon as an hypocondriacal imagination of the Christians." *Present State of the Jews*, 1675, p. 26.

* "Les témoins de l'unité de Dieu dans toutes les nations du monde." *Hist. des Juifs*, L. vii. C. xxxiii. Sect. xv. *(P.)*

"When we have clothed," says Dr. Addison, "their *present infidelity*, with the most aggravating circumstances, yet we must confess ourselves beholden to them for the preservation of that inestimable jewel, *the knowledge of the one true God*, when the rest of mankind was involved in the belief and adoration of many false deities." *Present State*, p. 4.

† Mr. Badcock. See *Familiar Letters*, 1790, No. XXII. P. S.

sense enough to despise him, and told him, that as long as Christianity was thought contradictory to the first law of Judaism, the conversion of his brethren would be impossible. The parson wanted to baptize him. The Rabbi said, religion was a serious matter, and he would be a convert in reality before he would be one in profession. He has been much with me. I hope to be able to send you a pleasing account of him."

I am, &c.

LETTER XII.

Of the Personification of the Logos.

REV. SIR,

YOU still deny that the Christian fathers were acquainted with any such thing as the *personification*, that is, *the making a real intelligent person* of the *Logos*, or wisdom of God; whereas, absurd as I acknowledge the notion to be, it was most indisputably the real doctrine both of *Philo*, the platonizing Jew, and of those who were called *orthodox Christians*, who platonized likewise. I speak within compass when I say, that I can produce hundreds of passages which prove in the clearest manner that the divinity which they ascribed to Christ was the very same *principle* which had constituted the *wisdom* and other *powers* of God the Father; and that the *generation of the Son* was the commencement of the state of *actual personality* of the *Logos*, whether in time, as some thought, or from all eternity, as others, which latter was afterwards received as the established doctrine.

This was evidently agreeable to the principles of those Platonists, from whom *Philo* and those Christian fathers derived their opinion; and if you deny this, "a child," as you call me, "in Platonism,"* (which, however, does not, I hope, prevent me from being a man in Christianity,) I shall be able, as you will see in my larger work,† to teach you what you are at present ignorant of, with respect to it. If this kind of literature be your *home*,‡ I must say, that you have been a considerable time *from home*, and that you are at present unacquainted with several apartments in your

* *Letters*, p. 15. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 101.

† See *supra*, pp. 143—145, 152.

‡ *Letters*, p. 163. (*P.*) Dr. Horsley says, "I was much at home in the Greek language; I had redde the Ecclesiastical Historians, and I had been many years in the habit of thinking for myself, upon a variety of subjects." *Tracts*, p. 282.

own house. I shall then wait upon you at this house of yours, and endeavour to point them out to you.

With respect to my quotation from *Athenagoras*, and my account of his meaning,* you are pleased to say, it "only finishes the proof, if it was before defective, of your incompetency in the subject. It shews that you are so little acquainted with Platonism, that your mind cannot readily apprehend a Platonic notion, when it is clearly set before you. What you take for my meer conjecture," viz. that the *external display of power* is the thing that is called *generation*, "is the express assertion of Athenagoras, in the very passage which you have quoted."†

On the contrary, I maintain that, if your *external display of power* be any thing different from what I have called *the personification of the Logos*, or his becoming *a proper person*, so as to be God, in himself considered, it is contradicted by *Athenagoras* in this very passage, as well as by all the Christian writers who treat of the subject. In this passage he calls the Son "the first production of the Father, not that he was ever properly made;" (that is, out of nothing;) "for God being an eternal mind, had logos always in himself, being always λογικος;" that is, being always a reasonable, intelligent being. Now, Sir, what could any man mean by this expression, but that before this circumstance or event (which I call the *personification* of the Logos, and you the *external display of his powers)* took place, there was no more a proper Trinity of persons in God than there is in man? For God, like man, was then simply λογικος, an intelligent being; wisdom or intelligence being one of his attributes. Many of the fathers use this comparison, supposing the *logos* in God to have been originally exactly similar to *logos*, or reason in man. Now are there, think you, or was it ever imagined that there were, proper distinct persons in the mind of man, merely because that mind was λογικος, *rational?* The very expression excludes this idea, and must have been intended to exclude it.

But according to all the orthodox fathers, after this generation of the Son, (who before was nothing more with respect to the Father than *reason* is with respect to man,) he assumed a proper *distinct personality;* and this generation was with a view to the production of material beings, and not

* See Vol. V. p. 31; *supra*, p. 87.
† *Letters*, p. 124. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 233.

the production itself, or the *display of powers* in that production; for this generation was represented as the proper *act of the eternal Father*, whereas the *display of powers* in the production of material beings (if I must adopt your quaint language) was, according to them, the proper *act of the Son*. According to them it certainly was the Son, and not the Father, who was the immediate maker of all things. In my opinion, *Athenagoras's* notion was, that this generation of the Son took place *in time*, and not from all eternity; because he says, that from the beginning, or from eternity, God was simply νους, *a mind*, having logos in himself, as being always λογικος, *reasonable*, or *intelligent*.

Athenagoras, however, as appears from this very passage, the beginning of which I quoted, was very far from having a notion of *three* distinct persons in the Trinity. For, though he thought with *Justin Martyr*, that the *Logos*, from the time of his generation, assumed a *permanent personality*, the Holy Spirit did not, but was like *a beam of the sun*, sometimes emitted from the Father, and sometimes drawn into him again, agreeably to the philosophy of those times concerning the sun and his light. This was also the kind of personal existence that *Justin Martyr* said that some persons in his time ascribed to the Son, and which was also said to have been the doctrine of *Marcellus* of *Ancyra*.

You say, that "Tertullian, to prevent the very conclusion which you draw from this analogy, that the Logos was at some time or another a mere attribute, remarks, that nothing empty or unsubstantial can proceed from God; for the Divine nature admitting neither quality nor accident, every thing belonging to it must be substance. This argument," you add, "is ably stated in the Dialogues of the learned Dr. Leslie."*

This indeed, Sir, is an argument that requires both an *able stating* and an *able defence;* for, in itself, nothing can be more weak. What, think you, could the fathers mean by saying that, after the emission of the Logos, the original Divine Mind was not destitute of *logos?* Did they not mean that he was not destitute of *reason* or *understanding?* Is there not, then, necessarily implied an identity of nature between the *logos emitted* and *logos retained?* Does it not follow from hence, and from its being said that the Father was still λογικος, *rational*, that they were both originally what we call *reason?* Nay, do not some of the fathers

* *Letters*, p. 123. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 282.

compare the emission of the *Logos* from God to the emission of reason from man, in discoursing with one another?

You say, for it is *you* that say this, (I have met with nothing so very absurd in *Tertullian*,) that "the Divine nature admitting neither quality nor accident, every thing belonging to it must be substance." The Divine Being, then, has no *properties*, no *attributes*, no *perfections* at all, which is, in fact, denying his very *being*; for what is *being*, without *properties*? Pray, Sir, has the Son or the Holy Spirit any attributes? In all my reading I do not remember to have met with any absurdity equal to this, except your own peculiar conceit, that "one mind can beget another by the contemplation of its perfections,"* (now called *substances*,) a notion which you ascribe to *all the fathers*, though I will venture to say, it is not to be found in any of them. Strange enough, to be sure, are some of their conceits, but not quite so strange and absurd as this. There is, as you somewhere justly observe, a progress in *absurdity* as well as in *truth*.

Lactantius, you acknowledge, expresses himself clearly enough according to my idea of this subject, but you dispose of his *orthodoxy* as you did of *Origen's veracity*. You boldly deny it. This, indeed, is a very compendious method of answering me. But, Sir, the question is not whom you are *now* pleased to call orthodox, but who was deemed to be so in the age in which he lived. Now I challenge you to prove that any writer of the age of *Lactantius* considered him as heterodox. Indeed, it was very unlikely that the man who was chosen tutor to a son of *Constantine* should have been a person of that class.

In order to undervalue this excellent writer, you say, that "he ascribes a beginning to the existence of the eternal Father. No wonder, then," you add, "that he should ascribe a beginning to the Son's existence. You are welcome, Sir," you say, "to any advantage you may be able to derive from the authority of such a writer."† *Lactantius*, however, candidly construed, may perhaps be said only to have used an improper expression, namely, that *God made himself*, meaning no more than we do when we say that God is *self-existent*, which, in fact, implies the very contrary of what you ascribe to him. He advances this in proof of his general maxim, "Nec enim potest, ut ab ullo esse generatus, qui ipse universa generavit;" *he cannot be created of any who himself created all things*, which clearly implies that he

* See *supra*, pp. 93, 94.

† *Letters*, p. 129. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 239.

could not be created at all. For, though the *thing made* had a beginning, the *maker* could have none; and who was the *maker* in this case but God himself? The term *self-existent* is, in fact, (as it will appear, if it be analysed,) equally improper; for it implies that God is the *cause* of his own existence. For this reason, some who wish to speak with exactness, avoid that term, and rather say, that God is *eternal;* but they do not tax those who use the word *self-existent* with really believing that God had a beginning.

Whatever mistakes *Lactantius* may be supposed to have made as a *metaphysician*, it does not appear that in his own time he was charged with any; and they might have been as little noticed still, if he had been a *sound divine;* and though you suppose that he ascribed a beginning to the eternal Father, yet, if you had found that from the moment of the Father's existence, that of the Son had, in his idea, commenced also, you would perhaps have contented yourself with smiling at his notion, or at least have abated of the severity of your censure.

Constantine, whom you quote as in your favour, is directly against you. Taking your own words, he says, the Son "'was begotten, or rather he himself came forth, (being even ever in the Father,) for the setting in order of the things which were made by him.' Here," you say, "the emperor expounds generation by coming forth."* But then, Sir, he does not say that this *generation*, or *coming forth*, was the same thing with *the setting in order the things that were made by him;* but it was evidently something that took place previous to this *setting in order*, and with a view to it; so that this mysterious *generation* preceded what you quaintly call *the projection of energies*, and was not the same thing with it.

You still likewise confound the doctrine of Arius with that of the "personification of the Logos,"† than which no two things were more different, having always been opposed to each other, as you must have known, had you been so well read, as you pretend to be, in the ancient ecclesiastical writers, since a great proportion of their works is occupied in the discussion of this subject. The *Arians* maintained that Christ was a being *created out of nothing*, as other creatures were, notwithstanding the vastness of his powers, which were equal to the creation of all other things,

* *Letters*, p. 127. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 236.
† *Letters*, p. 116. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 228.

visible and invisible; and, not believing an eternal creation, they likewise said that there was a time when the Son did not exist. Both these propositions were denied by the orthodox of that age, who maintained that Christ was not made out of *nothing*, for that he was the *Logos*, the *wisdom*, the *power*, &c. of the Father, and that he had always existed in the Father, as reason does in man, though his *personality* was by some supposed to have commenced in time. You must give me leave to say you are but little acquainted with the principles even of *Platonism*, and especially those of the later Platonists, from whom the Christian fathers more immediately derived their notions, if you are not able to enter into this idea.

This personification, or the commencement of an actual *personality* of what was an *attribute* of God, is a strange idea; but, strange as it is, it nevertheless actually took place in the minds of thousands, and was in truth all the orthodoxy of the earlier ages. This *incipient orthodoxy* grew immediately out of Platonism, and is certainly absurd enough. The orthodoxy of the later ages and of the present grew out of that, and is infinitely more absurd. Their doctrine was mere *nonsense*, yours the plainest of all *contradictions*, as I shall clearly shew in my next letter.

"What the difference may be," you say, "between a making out of nothing, and the conversion of a meer attribute into a substance, or how a person made out of an attribute may differ from a person made out of nothing, I would rather, Sir, that you than I should take the trouble to explain."* I have explained it as well as such an absurdity can be explained, but it behoves you to explain it much more than it does me; for, absurd as the notion is, it certainly prepared the way for the still more absurd notion of *three equal divine persons in one Godhead.*

I am, &c.

LETTER XIII.

Considerations relating to the Doctrine of the Trinity.

REV. SIR,

I OWN I was particularly desirous of hearing what you could possibly say on the subject of my *seventh letter*, in which I advanced some general considerations relating to the doctrine of the *Trinity;* but, unfortunately, you content

* *Letters*, p. 118. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 226.

yourself with giving "only a general reply to some parts of *that* letter. A particular answer," you say, "to the several objections which it contains would lead me into metaphysical disquisitions; which I wish to decline, because in that subject I foresee that we should want common principles and a common language."*

Now I make no doubt, Sir, but that if it had been *possible* for you to have given any plausible answer to the difficulties started in that letter, you would have found some principle, common or uncommon, on which to found it, and some language also, which might have been intelligible to me and your readers. But as you profess that you do not expect to convince *me*, it would have been quite sufficient for your purpose if you could have found common principles and common language for others.

I am the more concerned at your silence, as I was in hopes of having some further account of your own peculiar notion of *the necessary origin of the Son* "from the Father's contemplation of his own perfections;"† but to my great mortification I find not one more gleam of light on this curious subject. You said that this doctrine was agreeable to the notions of all the fathers, as well as of the sacred writers, and I challenged you to produce any authority for it, except what exists in your own imagination. In my opinion, nothing can be conceived more absurd than the idea of the necessary production of an intelligent being, possessed of actual, substantial personality, equal in all respects to the original intelligent being, from the mere self-contemplation of that original being's perfections. I said that nothing in the *Jewish Cabbala* could be more absurd.‡ You intimate that I may know but little of "the Jewish Cabbala;"§ but for my purpose it is quite enough, that it is a known proverbial expression to denote the *extreme of absurdity;* and if so, whatever the Jewish Cabbala may really be, (of which I may perhaps know as much as yourself, and of which we may each of us soon learn enough from *Basnage*,) the phrase could not be misapplied.‖

* *Letters*, p. 136. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 247. † See *supra*, pp. 93, 94, 228.
‡ *Supra*, p. 95. § *Letters*, p. 149. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 263.
‖ "The learned Prelate, in the fourth *Disquisition* annexed to the edition of his *Tracts in controversy with Dr. Priestley*, has laboured much, not indeed to defend the mysterious doctrine of the Son's generation from the Father's contemplation of his own perfections, but to prove that he was not himself the inventor of the sublime mystery. In his appeal to the writings of the fathers the Bishop totally fails: nor does he succeed much better in those of the schoolmen. The first plain example of this curious doctrine is found in a treatise published under the sanction of 'the Council of Trent,' entitled '*Catechismus ad Parochos*,' in which 'the

I find, however, a few other things on the subject of that letter which are curious enough; so that, for the amusement, if not the instruction of my readers, I shall make some observations on them.

I. In the first place, I still think that you yourself are not perfectly orthodox, for besides your virtual disapprobation of "the *damnatory clause*" in the Athanasian Creed,* you allow a real *superiority* in the Father. "If," you say, "from such expressions" as *my Father is greater than I*, "you would be content to infer that the Almighty Father is indeed the fountain and the center of divinity, and that the equality of godhead is to be understood with some mysterious subordination of the Son to the Father; you would have the concurrence of the ancient fathers, and of many advocates of the true faith in all ages."† But give me leave to say, that any *proper subordination*, mysterious or not mysterious, implies *inferiority*, and is an infringement of the doctrine of the *perfect equality* of the three persons; so that it cannot be, as your Creed says, *none is afore or after another*. You say, "I maintain the equality of the three persons in all the attributes of the Divine nature. I maintain their equality in rank and authority, with respect to all created things, whatever relations or differences may subsist between themselves."‡ But their equal superiority to all created beings is no proof at all of any proper equality among themselves. If so, all men would be equal among themselves, because all men are superior to brutes.

Your notion of a real subordination, which must imply *inferiority*, and indeed *imperfection*, in any of the persons in the Trinity, is certainly not the orthodoxy that took place after the council of *Nice*, and that of the *Athanasian* Creed.

II. I now come to something still more extraordinary. "I maintain," you say, "that the three persons are one being—I maintain that each person by himself is God; because each possesses fully every attribute of the Divine nature."§ Then, Sir, I assert, that you maintain as palpa-

true believer' is exhorted 'to pray that he may be thought worthy to be allowed to see what that wonderful fecundity of God the Father is, that, *contemplating and exerting his intelligence upon himself*, he should beget a son, the exact counterpart and equal of himself.' Melancthon appears to have entertained the same extravagant notion, and Zanchius reproves it. At any rate it is sufficiently apparent that the honour of the invention does not appertain to Bishop Horsley." Mr. Belsham's *Note*. See Bishop Horsley's *Tracts*, pp. 467—476.

* *Letters*, p. 165. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 284.
† *Letters*, p. 145. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 258.
‡ *Letters*, p. 149. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 263.
§ *Letters*, p. 148. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 262.

ble a *contradiction* as it is in the power of man to form an idea of. The term *being* may be predicated of every thing, and therefore of each of the three persons in the Trinity. For, to say that Christ, for instance, is God, but that there is no *being*, no *substance*, to which his attributes may be referred, were manifestly absurd; and therefore when you say, that "each of these persons is by himself God," you must mean, and in effect say, that the *Father* separately considered, has a *being*, that the *Son* likewise, separately considered, has his *being*, and likewise that the *Holy Spirit*, separately considered, has his *being*. Now, Sir, if you will be pleased to count them up, you will find that you have got *three beings* as well as *three persons*, and what can these three beings be but *three Gods*, without supposing that there are "three co-ordinate persons, or three Fathers, three Sons, or three Holy Ghosts." If you like an algebraic expression better than this, it will stand thus, $1+1+1=3$. Have the courage then, Sir, to speak out, and *say* what you must *mean*, if you have any meaning at all, that you worship *three Gods*.

But you say that "these persons are all included in the very idea of God; and that for that reason, as well as for the identity of the attributes in each, it were impious and absurd to say there are three Gods."* If there be any foundation for this remark, it must be impossible for any man to have an idea of a God, without having at the same time an idea of these three persons; and then either there cannot be any such thing as an Unitarian, denying these three persons in the Godhead, or else all Unitarians are in fact *Atheists*, having no idea of any God at all.

As you seem to have bewildered yourself very much upon the subject of *three persons and one God*, I shall enter a little further into the metaphysical analysis of it. By the words *being*, *substance*, *substratum*, &c. we can mean nothing more than the *foundation* as it were *of properties*, or some thing to which, in our idea, we refer all the particular attributes of whatever exists. In fact, they are terms that may be predicated of every thing that is the subject of thought or discourse, all the discrimination of things depending upon their *peculiar properties*. So that whenever the properties differ, we say that there is a corresponding difference in the *things*, *beings*, or *substances* themselves. Consequently, if the Father, Son, and Spirit differ in any respect, so as to

* *Letters*, p. 148. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 262.

have *different properties*, either in relation to themselves or to other beings, we must, according to the analogy of all language, say that they are *three different beings*, or *substances*.

Supposing again, that there is what you call an *identity of attributes* in each of them, so that, being considered one after the other, no difference could be perceived even in idea, as may be supposed to be the case of *three men*, who should perfectly resemble one another in all external and internal properties; and supposing, moreover, that there should be a perfect coincidence in all their thoughts and actions; though there might be a perfect *harmony* among them, and this might be called *unity*, they would still be *numerically three*. Consequently, though the *Father*, *Son* and *Spirit* had no real differences, but as you say, they had "the most perfect identity of nature, the most entire unity of will and consent of intellect, and an incessant co-operation in the exertion of common powers, to a common purpose,"* yet would they, according to the analogy of language, not be *one God*, but *three Gods;* or, which is the same thing, they would be *three beings*, with equal divine natures, just as the *three men* would be three beings with equal human natures.

Had you never heard of the *Parmenides*, I should have had some hopes of your understanding these *modern metaphysics*. But though I suppose I have left you far behind (perhaps gone to look into *Plato*, to see what he says on the subject,) I shall proceed without you, and give the modern reader my opinion with respect to the proper and only intelligible use of the word *person*.

The term *being*, as I have observed, may be predicated of every thing, without distinction; but the term *person* is limited to *intelligent beings*. Three men, therefore, are not only three beings, but likewise three persons; the former is the *genus*, and the latter the *species*. But a *person* is not less a *being* on this account; for each *man* may be said to be a *being*, as well as a *person*. Consequently, though the word *person* be properly applied to each of the three component parts of your Trinity, yet as *person* is a species, comprehended under the genus *being*, they must be *three beings*, as well as *three persons*.

While you, Sir, are either absent, or wondering at these *novelties*, I proceed to observe, that the term *God* is a subdivision under the term *person;* because we define *God*, to

* *Letters*, p. 145. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 259.

be *an intelligent being possessed of all possible perfections.* Consequently, if the Father, Son, and Spirit, be each of them possessed of all possible perfections, which you do not deny, they are each of them *a person*, each of them *a being*, and each of them *a God;* and what is this but making *three Gods?* Avoid this conclusion from these principles, or assume other principles more just and natural, if you can.

These, Sir, if you be within hearing at all, are such metaphysics as you might have learned from Mr. Locke if you had not been, unfortunately for yourself and your flock, poring so long over the *Parmenides.* You will probably object to my definition of the word *person*, as applied to the doctrine of the Trinity; but if you give any other definition, I will venture to assert, that you might as well say, that the *Father*, *Son*, and *Spirit*, are *three Abracadabra's* as *three persons.* They will be equally words without meaning.

Athanasius, and many of the ancient fathers, after the Council of *Nice*, became absolute *tritheists* on this principle, believing that the Father, Son, and Spirit, are no otherwise *one*, than as three particular men may be considered as one. *Athanasius*, considering this very difficulty, says, "since the Father is called God, the Son God, and the Holy Spirit God, how is it that there are not three Gods?" He answers, "because where there is a common nature, the name of the dignity is likewise common."* And he illustrates this, by God's calling the whole human race by the name of *man*, in the singular number, and by Moses's speaking of the *horse* and *horseman* being drowned in the Red Sea, when in fact, great numbers of each sort were intended. "If this," says he, "be the case with respect to men, who differ so much as they do from each other, so that all men may be called *one man*, much more may we call the Trinity one God, when their dignity is undivided, they have one kingdom, one power, will, and energy, which distinguishes the Trinity from created things."†

I am far from saying that *Athanasius* is consistent with himself in this account of the unity of the three persons in the Trinity; for he elsewhere says that there is *one God*, because there is *one unbegotten Father*, the sole fountain of deity, &c., but this representation occurs in many of the

* Και πως φησι δυναται λεγεσθαι ὁ πατηρ Θεος, και ὁ υἱος Θεος, και το πνευμα το ἁγιον Θεος, και ου τρεις εισι Θεοι; ὁπη κοινα τα της φυσεως, κοινον και ονομα της αξιας. "De Communi Essentia." *Opera*, I. p. 213. (*P.*)

† Δια το κοινον της φυσεως πασα ἡ οικημενη εις ανθρωπος εκληθη· ὁπη δε αμεριστος ἡ αξια, μια βασιλεια, μια δυναμις, και βουλη και ενεργεια, ιδιαζουσα την τριαδα απο της κτισεως, ἱνα λεγω Θεον. *Ibid.* p. 214. (*P.*)

fathers, and in my larger history I shall shew to what a variety of other miserable subterfuges the orthodox were driven to maintain the unity of their trinity.

In the dialogue against the *Macedonians*, written after the age of *Athanasius*, the orthodox speaker is represented as saying, "As Paul, Peter and Timothy are of one nature, and three hypostases; so I say, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three hypostases, and one nature."*

You say, "The opinion of three persons in the Godhead, *unrelated to each other, and distinct in all respects*, is rank tritheism; because what are unrelated and distinct in all respects, are many in all respects; and being many in all respects, cannot in any respect be one."† But no *relation*, let it be ever so intimate, can remove their *numerical difference*. Let three men be *connected* in any manner that you can imagine, they can only be *one*, as partaking of the *same nature*, and therefore, though they resemble one another ever so much, they can only be said to be *similar* in all respects; but still they will be numerically *three*. In like manner, suppose any relations you please, known or unknown, between the three persons to whom the title of *God* equally belongs, they will no more make *one God*, than three related men can make one man, but must be numerically *three Gods*. Councils and Synods, kings and houses of parliament, may decree that *three are one*, and archdeacons may defend the doctrine, but miracles cannot prove it. As you and your friends say with respect to some late proceedings in the Royal Society,‡ "*Two and two* ever will be *four*, and the three angles of a triangle will be equal to two right angles."

But I find it is in vain to appeal to reason, or even to the Scriptures. Your doctrine of the Trinity was not derived from reason or the Scriptures, but from Plato. "I then set myself," you say, "to consider whether I knew enough of the Divine unity to pronounce the 'Trinity an infringement of it.' Upon this point the Platonists, whose acquaintance I now began to cultivate, soon brought me to a right mind."§

They did the same good office for *Austin* before you, and I fear they are still doing the same for others, notwith-

* Ὥσπερ Παυλος, και Πετρος, και Τιμοθεος, φυσεως μιας εισι και τρεις ὑποστασεις, οὑτως Πατερα, και Υἱον, και Ἅγιον Πνευμα, τρεις ὑποστασεις λεγω, και μιαν φυσιν. "Communi Essentia." *Opera*, II. p. 269. (*P.*)

† *Letters*, p. 5. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 88, 89.

‡ See *New An. Reg.* 1784, V. pp. [273]—[275].

§ *Letters*, p. 163. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 281.

standing the cautions given us in the Scriptures against the mixture of vain and absurd philosophy with Christianity. You kindly advise me to take the same course. "If," you say, "you imagine that the absolute unity of the Divine substance is more easy to be explained than the Trinity, let me entreat you, Sir, to read the Parmenides. It is, indeed, in Plato's school, if anywhere, that a man's eyes are likely to be opened to his own ignorance."* But, Sir, what must they do who cannot read the *Parmenides?* I suppose they must go without the doctrine of the Trinity, and like the lower order of Christians in the time of *Origen*, be content with the *corporeal gospel*, the plain doctrine of *Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* But with this the apostle *Paul* was contented, and so am I.

I have, however, read the *Parmenides;* and though I expect you will exult over me as usual, calling me, "a child in Platonism,"† and say, that I "cannot readily apprehend a Platonic notion when it is clearly set before me,"‡ I have no scruple to declare, that I was not able to get one ray of good sense from the whole of it; I should even think the extracting of sun-beams from cucumbers the more hopeful project of the two. And so far am I from advising the reading of it for any useful purpose, that I should rather say, if a man perceives any incipient cloudiness in his head, and wishes to have the little understanding that he has left utterly confounded, let him read the *Parmenides.* § I shall say the same with respect to almost all the metaphysics of the ancients; and it is very possible that I may have given as much attention to these things as you have done, though I have not been so ostentatious of it. Any person since the time of Mr. Locke may say this of all the ancients without much arrogance. So far, however, I agree with you, that the study of the *Parmenides* may do very well by way of preparation for that of the doctrine of the Trinity. ‖

* *Letters*, p. 142. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 255.

† *Letters*, p. 15. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 101.

‡ *Letters*, p. 124. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 233.

§ Among other *mysteries*, as Mr. Sydenham calls them, of the Parmenides, Plato, after shewing that *littleness* cannot belong either to the *whole* or the *part* of any thing, concludes, that "nothing is *little* but *littleness itself*," ουδε τι εστι σμικρον πλην αυτης της σμικροτητος. It would be no bad parody on this to say, Nothing is nonsensical but nonsense itself; and this nonsense (if it can exist in the abstract) is in the Parmenides. (*P.*)

‖ If *Plato's school* has this talismanic power of *opening a man's eyes to his own ignorance*, I would advise Dr. Horsley to continue in it a while longer; for this is a branch of science in which he has yet something to learn. Nor will it be amiss if he take his *good and able ally* along with him; though, as it will lessen his presumption, it may hurt him as a *Reviewer*, which, no doubt, ought to be considered. (*P.*)

III. Perhaps the most extraordinary part of your whole performance is what you say of the *mysteriousness of the doctrine of the Divine unity*, and of the Unitarians having nothing to plead for themselves but single texts of Scripture, interpreted in a figurative manner. "If this word," (spoken of by *John,)* you say, "be the divine attribute Wisdom, then that attribute, in the degree which was equal to the formation of the universe, in this view of the scripture-doctrine, was conveyed entire into the mind of a meer man, the son of a Jewish carpenter. A much greater difficulty, in my apprehension, than any that is to be found in the catholic faith."*

In reading this and other passages in your *Letters*, I cannot help admiring your talent of lessening the difficulties of your own scheme, and magnifying those of others. If you use the same telescope, you certainly turn different ends to different objects.

Pray, Sir, what *Socinian* ever maintained that "the divine attribute Wisdom, in the degree which was equal to the formation of the universe, was conveyed entire into the mind of Jesus Christ"? What we believe, and all that is required by our interpretation of the *Logos* (as meaning the divine attribute *wisdom)* is, that a *portion* only of the same wisdom that formed the universe was communicated to Christ, a portion sufficient to enable him to do what he actually did, and to say what he actually said. The *Socinians* do not believe that Christ made the universe, or that he was any way instrumental in making it.

For my own part, I never before heard of or suspected any difficulty in God's making man the instrument by which to do what man alone could not do. Did not God suggest to *Moses* what he could not have delivered of himself? In many of the miracles which attended the release of the *Israelites* from *Egyptian* bondage, and their passage through the Wilderness, Moses was the immediate or ostensible agent, but the *power* was of God; and yet this was no proper infusing of the Divine power into Moses. The power was still the incommunicable attribute of the Divine Being. Accordingly, Jesus says, that it was not *himself*, but the *Father within him*, or acting by him, that did the works; and that the *words which he spake were not his own*. Moreover, he says of the apostles, that they should do greater things than he himself had done. From this, then,

* *Letters*, p. 138. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 249.

you ought to conclude, that the divine attributes of wisdom and power were conveyed entire into the minds of the apostles, or even that they were gods superior to Christ. Such reasoning as this I have hardly patience to refute. But surely you cannot be serious in saying that this difficulty in the *Socinian* scheme is equal to that of *three persons in one God*, in the *Athanasian* Trinity, or to that in your own account of the *Platonic* Trinity.

But perhaps the most extraordinary part of your whole work will be thought to be the following: in answer to my saying that "there are many, very many passages of Scripture, which inculcate the doctrine of the Divine unity in the clearest and strongest manner,"* you say, "Be pleased, Sir, to produce one of the many;"† meaning, evidently, that there is no such passage; and you add, "the Unitarians themselves pretend not that their doctrine is to be found in the plain literal sense of holy writ. On the contrary, they take the greatest pains to explain away the literal meaning."‡

Now, Sir, if you had really read any *Unitarian* treatise at all, you must have known that this representation is the reverse of the fact. We Unitarians certainly *pretend* at least, whether we be able to prove it or not, that the *general tenor, and plain literal sense of Scripture* is in our favour; that they are only *particular texts*, and those ill-understood, that you avail yourselves of; and we say that there is no difficulty in interpreting even those texts in perfect consistency with the Unitarian doctrine, if the true idiom of the language be considered.

You complain of my not *reading*, but only *looking through* authors. But surely you cannot have even *looked through* the very *Letters* of mine that you are professedly replying to. Let me, therefore, bring again before your view a paragraph or two in those letters, which, as far as *pretensions* go, directly contradict your confident assertion. See p. 101, where you will find as follows: "I will venture to say, that for one text in which you can pretend to find any thing harsh or difficult to me, I will engage to produce ten that must create more difficulty to you. How strangely must you torture the plainest language, and in which there is not a shadow of *figure*, to interpret to your purpose, 1 *Tim.* ii. 5: 'There is one God, and one mediator be-

* See *supra*, p. 102. † *Letters*, p. 141. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 254.
‡ *Letters*, p. 17. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 103, 104.

tween God and men, the man Christ Jesus;' 1 Cor. viii. 6: 'To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him;' or that expression of our Saviour himself, (*John* xvii. 3,) 'That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent'! Never upbraid us Unitarians with torturing the Scriptures, while you have these and a hundred other plain texts to strain at, and to bend to your *Athanasian* hypothesis; besides many *general arguments*, from reason and the Scriptures, of more real force than any particular texts, to answer."

This, Sir, was certainly answering your challenge to produce *one plain text* in favour of the Unitarian doctrine before it was thrown out. I appeal to yourself for the obvious sense of the passages I have now recited; and you say, "It is a principle with me, that the true sense of any phrase in the New Testament is, for the most part, what may be called its standing sense; that which will be the first to occur to common people of every country and in every age."*

I would also refer you to a small piece I lately published, entitled, "A general View of the Arguments for the Unity of God, and against the Divinity and Pre-existence of Christ, from Reason, from the Scriptures, and from History;"† which you seem to have seen, as you refer to my *two-penny pamphlets*,‡ for this is sold for two-pence. There you will find, not only that *Socinians* pretend to have the clear sense of Scripture in their favour, but many of those passages, expressive of that clear sense, produced. I there

* *Letters*, p. 28. [*Tracts*, p. 111.] It is remarkable that the orthodox, even after the Council of *Nice*, complained of the advantage which the Unitarians had in appealing to the literal sense of the Scriptures. "If," says *Gregory Nyssen*, "a man rests in the bare letter, so far he judaizes in opinion, and has not learned that a Christian is not the disciple of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." Ουκουν, ει ψιλω παραμενει τω γραμματι, και κατα τουτο το μερος ιουδαιζει τη γνωμη, και ουπω πεπαιδευται ὁτι ουχι γραμματος εστι Χριστιανος μαθητης, αλλα πνευματος· το γαρ γραμμα, φησιν, αποκτεινει, το δε πνευμα ζωοποιει. "Contra Eunomium Oratio xvi." *Opera*, II. p. 341.

It is to be observed, that by *judaizing* was meant adopting the doctrine of *the simple humanity of Christ*. For the ancient Unitarians were commonly compared by the orthodox to *Jews*, and the *Arians* to *Gentiles*, as worshippers of *two Gods;* the Arian Logos not being of the same substance with the Father; and therefore a maker of the world, or a God, quite distinct from him. (*P.*)

† See *supra*, p. 151.

‡ "—you," says Dr Horsley, "who are every day diffusing your dangerous doctrines among the common people in pamphlets published for their benefit in an ordinary form, to be purchased at the easy price of sixpence, a groat, and even twopence." *Tracts*, pp. 179, 180.

observe, that "the Scriptures contain the clearest and the most express declarations that there is but *one God*, without ever mentioning any exception in favour of a Trinity, or guarding us against being led into any mistake by such general and unlimited expressions." And if this language, as you suppose, always respected the multiplicity of gods among the Heathens, why is this one God in the *New Testament* always called *the Father*, and even the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? And why are we no where told that this one God is the *Trinity*, consisting of *the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost?* This, Sir, is the language of your *Litany* only. The Bible used in our conventicles contains no such barbarous jargon.

I would also recommend to your perusal another pamphlet of mine, called *An Appeal to the serious and candid Professors of Christianity*,* of which more than ten thousand have been sold for a penny each; and of this I have lately published a new edition, and have annexed to it the remarkable *Trial of Mr. Elwall*, of Wolverhampton, in this neighbourhood, for his publications in defence of the *Socinian* doctrine.† These small publications of mine have, I trust, done much good, though you will call it much mischief, in this country; and I rejoice in perceiving the increase of this good or this mischief every day; and I have no doubt of the successful spread of religious truth by means of these publications, notwithstanding all you can do to counteract them, as you boast, by means of the *Monthly Review*.

IV. In one thing I am glad to find that you and I entertain the same opinion, which is, that there is no medium between admitting the simple humanity of Christ, and, that he is properly God. "Having once admitted," you say, "his pre-existence in an exalted state, I saw the necessity of placing him at the head of the creation.—Being thus convinced that our Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the maker of all things, I found that I could not rest satisfied with the notion of a maker of the universe, *not God*. I saw that all the extravagancies of the Gnostics hung upon that one principle, and I could have little opinion of the truth of a principle which seemed so big with mischief."‡

You also observe, very justly, "Can any power or wisdom, less than the supreme, be a sufficient ground for the trust we are required to place in Providence? Make the

* Vol. II. pp. 383—404. † See *ibid.* pp. 417—429.
‡ *Letters*, p. 162. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 280, 281.

wisdom and the power of our ruler what you please, still, upon the Arian principle, it is the wisdom and the power of a creature. Where, then, will be the certainty that the evil which we find in the world has not crept in through some imperfection in the original contrivance, or in the present management; since every intellect below the first, may be liable to error, and any power short of the supreme, may be inadequate to purposes of a certain magnitude? But if evil may have thus crept in, what assurance can we have that it will ever be extirpated?"*

But if there be no proper medium between the *Athanasian* and the *Socinian* scheme, which I readily admit, I also maintain that there is no medium at all between the Socinian doctrine and an absolute contradiction, for such *Athanasianism* is; so that there is no resource but in the Socinian doctrine, oppose it as much as you will.

I am, &c.

LETTER XIV.

Of Prayer to Christ.

REV. SIR,

HAVING got *three persons*, all of them possessed of all divine perfections, all of them having intercourse with mankind, and consequently all of them naturally *objects of prayer*, I do not wonder that you appear to be a little embarrased in your ideas of what is proper to be done with respect to each of them, individually considered. "That the Father," you say, "is *a* proper object of prayer, God forbid that ever I should not acknowledge. That he is *the* proper object, in the sense in which you seem to make the assertion, in prejudice and exclusion of the other persons, God forbid that ever I should concede. I deny not that there is an honour personally due to him as the Father. There is also an honour personally due to the Son, as the Son, and to the Spirit, as the Spirit. But our knowledge of the personal distinctions is so obscure, in comparison of our apprehension of the general attributes of the Godhead, that it should seem that *the divinity* (the το θειον) is rather to be generally worshipped in the three persons jointly and indifferently, than that any distinct honours are to be offered to each separately. Prayer,

* *Letters*, p. 137. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 248, 249.

however, for succour against external persecution, seems addressed with particular propriety to the Son."*

Now, Sir, as this is a thing that relates to *practice*, I should have imagined that, if each of the three persons had been to be addressed separately, we should have been distinctly informed concerning the circumstances in which we were to pray to one of them, and not to the others; considering how difficult it must be, from the nature of the thing, for mere men to distinguish the separate rights of *three divine persons*. That you yourself have made some mistake in this business will not, I think, be difficult to shew. In order to this, let us consider how your *supposition* or *theory* corresponds to the *fact*; for, if it be not supported by corresponding facts, how ingenious or probable soever it may seem to be, *à priori*, it must fall to the ground. You will agree with me, I imagine, that the apostles and primitive Christians knew whether the Father or the Son was the more proper object of prayer in the time of persecution. Let us see, then, both what *directions* they gave, and also what they themselves actually *did* in this case.

The apostle *James*, writing to Christians in a state of persecution, says, (*Ch.* i. 2,) "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (or *trials*). *Ver.* 5: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." You will hardly say, that in this he advises them to apply to *Christ* or to *the Trinity* for direction in these circumstances. If you do, I will venture to assert, that your hypothesis has no countenance either in the Scriptures, or in any Christian writer before the Council of *Nice*; for they all understood *the Father alone* to be intended whenever mention is made of *God* absolutely.

Peter, writing to Christians in the same situation, says, (1 *Ep.* iv. 19,) "Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful creator." This is certainly meant of God the Father; but more evidently must we so interpret 1 *Peter* v. 10: "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." I do not find here, or any where else in the Scriptures, any direction to pray to Christ in time of persecution, or, indeed, in any other circumstances.

Let us now attend to some particulars in the *history* of the apostles. When *Herod* had put to death *James*, the brother

* *Letters*, p. 103. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 209, 210.

of *John*, and imprisoned *Peter*, we read, (*Acts* xii. 5,) that "prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God," not to Christ, "for him." When *Paul* and *Silas* were in prison at *Philippi*, we read, (*Acts* xvi. 25,) that they "sang praises unto God," not to Christ. And when Paul was warned of what would befal him if he went to Jerusalem, (*Acts* xxi. 14,) they said, "The will of the Lord be done." This, you must suppose, was meant of *God the Father*, because Christ himself used the same language in this sense, when, in praying to the Father, he said, [*Luke* xxii. 42,] "Not my will, but thine be done."

These, you may perhaps say, are only *incidental circumstances*, on which no great stress is to be laid. But in *Acts* iv. 24—30, we have a prayer of some length addressed to God the Father, at the very beginning of the persecution of Christians, when *Peter* and *John* had been examined before the high-priest and his court, and had been threatened by them. As I suspect that you may not have given much attention to the tenor of it, I shall recite the whole, which is as follows: "And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God, with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, who hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; who, by the mouth of thy servant David, hast said, 'Why did the Heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Christ.' For of a truth against thy holy child" (or servant) "Jesus whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child" (or servant) "Jesus."

We have now examined some particulars both of the *instructions* and the *examples* of scripture, with regard to the proper object of prayer in time of persecution; from which it appears that, even in this case, we have no authority to pray to any other than that one God, to whom Christ himself prayed in his affliction; and if we be not authorized to pray to Christ in time of persecution, there is, by your own acknowledgment, less propriety in praying to him on any other occasion.

As you profess a great regard for those who are called *apostolical fathers*, let us attend to the prayer of *Polycarp*, when he was tied to the stake, ready to be burned alive. Now this prayer, which is a pretty remarkable one, is addressed to God the Father, and not to Christ; so that this disciple of the apostle *John* did not think the example of *Stephen* any precedent for him. The prayer begins as follows: "O Lord, God Almighty, the Father of thy well-beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of thee, the God of angels and powers, and of every creature, and especially of the whole race of just men, who live in thy presence."*

You see, then, Sir, how greatly you have been misled by your *speculative theology*, by your attention to particular texts, single incidents, and imaginary *proprieties*, without attending to the general tenor of scripture, the plain directions that are there given for our conduct, and the constant practice of the apostles, which supply the best interpretation of their doctrine. To conclude, as you have done, from the single case of *Stephen*, that all Christians are authorized to pray to Christ, is like concluding that all matter has a tendency to go upwards, because a needle will do so when a magnet is held over it. When you shall be in the same circumstances with *Stephen*, having your mind strongly impressed with a vision of Christ sitting at the right hand of God, you may then, perhaps, be authorized to address yourself to him as he did; but the whole tenor of the Scriptures proves that, otherwise, you have no authority at all for any such practice.

I am, &c.

LETTER XV.

Of the Unitarian Principles with respect to Mahometanism and Infidelity.

Rev. Sir,

We are not, I hope, to judge of your acquaintance with the opinions of the ancients (which we have dignified with the name of *learning*) by the correctness with which you state the opinions of the moderns, even those which you undertake to controvert, and therefore ought to have studied. Here, Sir, you certainly have no choice but of the grossest *ignorance*, and consequently *presumption*, or the most per-

* Relation of the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp," Sect. xiv., *Wake*, pp. 147, 148.

verse and wilful of all misrepresentations. Your ignorance of the state of the Dissenters, of which a sufficient specimen has been given, shews that you are far from being *at home*, even in your own country; but the account you give in your Sixteenth Letter, of the principles of the *Unitarians*, and the relation they bear to those of *unbelievers*, is such as can hardly be accounted for from mere ignorance. I fear it has a worse origin. I hope I shall not be thought uncandid; but I cannot put any favourable construction upon your insinuations on this subject.

You say, "The whole difference between you and them" (that is, between the *Unitarians* and *Mahometans*) "seems very inconsiderable. The true mussulman believes as much, or rather more of Christ than the Unitarian requires to be believed; and though the Unitarians have not yet recognized the divine mission of Mahomet, there is good ground to think they will not long stand out. In Unitarian writings of the last century, it is allowed of Mahomet that he had no other design than to restore the belief of the unity of God; of his religion, that it was not meant for a new religion, but for a restitution of the true intent of the Christian; of the grand prevalence of the Mahometan religion, that it has been owing not to force and the sword, but to that one truth contained in the Alcoran, the unity of God. With these friendly dispositions towards each other, it should seem that the Mahometan and the Unitarian might easily be brought to agree."*

Now all these propositions which you have laid down as *certain facts*, are so highly improbable in themselves, that few persons, perhaps, will believe that you can be serious in advancing them; and I shall think myself at liberty to treat them as groundless calumnies, till you shall produce some authority or evidence for them. For the state of things, as they now are, and which ought to be known to you, gives not the least colour of plausibility to them. If the difference between the *Unitarians* and the *Mahometans* be so inconsiderable that there is good ground to think that the Unitarians will soon acknowledge the divine mission of *Mahomet*, how has it happened that none of them have yet done it, and actually turned Mussulmans? I think it possible that, notwithstanding the extensive reading of which you give us so many intimations, I may be as well acquainted with the Unitarian writers of the last age as you

* *Letters*, p. 151. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 266.

can pretend to be; and I have never met with any such passage as you mention; and I think if you could have produced any such in support of your assertions, you would not have failed to do it.

You may at any time see what I have said of the *Mahometan* religion on several occasions,* and also what other Unitarians of the present age have advanced concerning it. Do you find in my publications, or theirs, any thing favourable to the pretensions of *Mahomet?* And if the tendency of the Unitarian principles be to approximate towards those of the Mahometans, it might be expected that they would have been nearer to each other now than they were in the last century. I shall, therefore, unless authorities are produced, consider what you have said on this subject as another specimen of your *invention* of *facts*, and of your unparalleled effrontery in publishing them, in order to throw an odium upon the Unitarians. You might, indeed, almost as well assert that all the *Unitarians* in England are already so far *Mahometans*, that, to your certain knowledge, they are actually circumcised. What respect, Sir, can be due to the man who has not scrupled to have recourse to these calumnies, for they cannot be called by any softer name, in order to blacken his adversaries? And what can we think of the *cause* that requires to be thus supported?

Your curious account of "a negociation regularly opened on the part of the English Unitarians, in the reign of Charles the Second, with the Ambassador of the Emperor of Morocco,"† for which you quote Dr. Leslie, was probably an invention of his, similar to those of yours in these Letters, and calculated to answer a similar purpose. As it is a *stale business*, it may be sufficient to give a *stale answer* to it; and, therefore, without examining into the history of what passed in the reign of Charles the Second, I shall content myself with copying what Mr. Emlyn said in answer to it, which is as follows:

"As to your rarity of the address to the Morocco ambassador, I see not what it amounts to more than a complaint of the corruption of the Christian faith in the article of one God, which the *Mahometans* have kept, by consent of all sides. Yet, for as much as I can learn nothing from any *Unitarians* of any such address from them, nor do you produce any subscribers' names, I conclude no such address was ever made by any *deputed* from them, whatever any

* See the Author's latest view of this subject, Vol. XVI. pp. 312—376.

† *Letters*, p. 152. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 266.

single person might do. I suppose you conclude from the matter of it that it must be from some *Unitarian*, and perhaps so; yet you may remember that so you concluded from the matter of Dr. Tillotson's Sermons, that they were a *Socinian's*."*

After being represented as having made near approaches to Mahometanism, I cannot be surprised that you should seem to insinuate that I am an unbeliever in Christianity; for certainly I can be no less, if what you say be true. "With your notions of inspiration, you are at liberty to dispute what the inspired apostles taught."† Here is no exception made with respect to any thing that they taught, and even what they taught from inspiration. I do not personally require any acknowledgment for these gross misrepresentations, but the public, whom you have imposed upon, have a right to demand it of you.

Your endeavour to shew the little value of Christianity on the *Unitarian* principles, besides shewing your disposition to calumniate, discovers equal ignorance both of the state of the world, and of the system of revelation. You talk of "sober Deists, who, rejecting revelation, acknowledge, however, the obligations of morality, believe a Providence and expect a future retribution.—The whole difference between you and us," you make them say, "is this, that we believe the same things upon different evidence; you, upon

* Emlyn's *Works*, 1746, II. p. 93. (*P.*) Dr. Horsley, in an N. B. added to his sixteenth Letter, when he collected his *Tracts* in 1789, complains, that "Dr. Priestley is pleased to treat *the story* with great contempt, as an invention, that is to say, a lie or forgery of Dr. Leslie's." To prove the contrary, Dr H. appeals to "the *Codices MSS. Tenisoniani*, No. 678, in the Archiepiscopal Library at Lambeth." Here he found, "Jan. 15, 1789—the very Letter to Ameth Ben Ameth, published by Dr. Leslie, in his *Socinian Controversy discussed*," with three other MSS. which are in Latin, the whole endorsed by "Thomas Tenison, then Vicar of St. Martin's," afterwards Archbishop, as "the original papers, which a cabal of Socinians in London offered to present to the Embassador of the king of Fez and Morocco, when he was taking leave of England, August 1682." Tenison adds, that "the said Embassador refused to receive them, after having understood that they concerned religion;" that "the agent of the Socinians was Monsieur Verzé;" and that the papers were given to Tenison by "Sir Charles Cottrell, Knt. Mr. of the Cerem. then present," who "desired he might have them." Dr. Horsley's *Tracts*, pp. 272—274.

A few years since I was in the Lambeth Library, and looked, though cursorily, into the "thin Folio MS." to which Dr. Horsley refers; and I have no doubt, from recollection, that his account of the *Memorandum*, purporting to be *Tenison's*, is correct. If, however, the "Cabal of Socinians," as the Priest of St. Martin's elegantly expresses himself, really attempted to persuade the Emperor or his Embassador, that *Jesus*, and not *Mahomet*, was the prophet of the "one only Supreme Deity," whom Socinians and Mahometans alike professed to worship, there is nothing in the transaction of which *Unitarians* ought to be ashamed. They should rather imitate the zeal and worthy purpose of their predecessors, while they pursue more hopeful undertakings.

† *Letters*, p. 196. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 213.

the testimony of a man; who, you say, was raised up to preach these truths: we, upon the evidence of reason, which we think a higher evidence than any human testimony," &c.*

I wish, Sir, you would produce a few of these *sober Deists*. I think I am acquainted with as many *unbelievers* as you are; but whatever may have been the case formerly, I know no such persons at present as you describe; that is, *unbelievers* who have a serious expectation of a future life. We may see from fact that the arguments from reason alone are unable to make any lasting impression on the minds of those who can resist the much plainer evidences of Christianity; which, being of the historical kind, are much better adapted to carry conviction to the mind.

The present state of things furnishes an abundant proof that it is by the gospel alone that life and immortality are fully brought to light. This gives the most satisfactory of all evidence of a future life, such as we see can really influence the heart and the life; such as can controul the strongest passions of the human breast, and give men a manifest superiority of mind to the world, and all the pleasures and pains of it.

To imagine, as you do, that the arguments for a future life from *reason alone*, that is, from appearances in the common course of nature, are at all comparable to the evidence that results from the gospel history, and especially from the death and resurrection of Christ, (a man like ourselves, and therefore the most proper pattern of a future universal resurrection,) discovers such a want of real discernment and judgment, and such ignorance of human nature, as I will venture to say are no where more conspicuous than in these letters of yours.

Your representation of the doctrine of *Materialism* as favourable to *Atheism*,† only shews your ignorance of the system that you wish to expose, as indeed what you dropped on the subject of *ideas*,‡ sufficiently shewed before. But upon this I have said so much, (more I suppose than you will ever take the trouble to read,) in my *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*, § that I shall not reply to such trite and idle reasoning as yours here.

What you say on the subject of the *resurrection*, if it has any weight at all, affects the Christian doctrine, as taught

* *Letters*, p. 154. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 269.
† *Tracts*, pp. 270, 271.
‡ *Letters*, p. 113. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 220.
§ Vol. IV. pp. 330—411.

by St. Paul. "The hope which you hold out," you say, "of a resurrection, he" (the Atheist) "will tell you is no hope at all, even admitting that the evidence of the thing could, upon your principles, be indisputable. The atoms which compose *me*, your Atheist will say, may indeed have composed a man before, and may again; but *me* they will never more compose when once the present *me* is dissipated. I have no recollection of a former, and no concern about a future self." *

This might have been copied from the writings of the Heathen philosophers against Christianity; for if, as I have already intimated, there be any force in the objection, it will operate against the doctrine of a resurrection universally considered. Because, if the thing that dies, (and it is the body only that is ever said to die,) do not rise and come to life again, there is no proper resurrection at all.

Whatever hope of a future life you may build on the *Platonic* doctrine of a *soul*, it is, I will venture to say, universally abandoned by the philosophical unbelievers of the present age; and therefore, with respect to them, you can never establish any hope of a future life at all on any other principles than those *purely Christian ones* which you endeavour to expose; and whatever difficulties may attend the consideration of it, they will all vanish, even to the philosophical mind, before the certain promise of that great Being who made us and all things. If we once believe that *He* has given us this assurance, we can never suppose that He will be at a loss for proper means to accomplish his end; and if the gospel history be true, we have this assurance; but from natural appearances we have no evidence whatever of any thing belonging to man that can subsist, feel, and act, when the body is in the grave; and what I maintain is, that we must depart from all the known rules of philosophizing before we can conclude that any such thing belongs to man.

From the same mode of reasoning by which we can prove that there is an immaterial principle in *man*, we may also prove that there is such a principle not only in a *brute* or a *plant*, but even in a *magnet*, and the most inanimate parts of nature; for even the most inanimate parts of nature are possessed of *powers* or *properties*, between which and what we see and feel of them, we are not able to perceive any connexion whatever. There is just as much connexion between the principles of *sensation* and *thought* and the brain of a

* *Letters*, p. 156. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 271.

man, as between the powers of a magnet and the iron of which it is made, or between the principle of gravitation and the matter of which the earth and the sun are made; and whenever you shall be able to deduce the powers of a magnet from the other properties of iron, you may perhaps be able to deduce the powers of sensation and thought from the other properties of the brain. But to you, Sir, the whole of this subject is absolutely *terra incognita*. I perceive no traces of your being much *at home*, as you pretend, in the *Greek* language; but here you are a perfect stranger.

You are pleased to supply unbelievers with objections to revelation on the views that I have given of it; but I can produce numbers who will tell you, that such Christianity as yours, including the belief of three persons in one God, is a thing absolutely incapable of proof, and who have actually rejected it on account of this doctrine, which they consider as so palpable an *absurdity* and *contradiction*, as not even miracles can make credible.

I am, &c.

LETTER XVI.

Of Bishop Bull's Defence of Damnatory Clauses.

Rev. Sir,

In this Letter I shall exhibit a curious specimen of your peculiar mode of controversial writing, and the advantage you take of the most trifling oversights in your opponent.

You gave the highest encomiums to the works of Bishop Bull, without any qualification or distinction, and recommended them to your clergy, as an infallible guide in every thing relating to the subject of our controversy. On this I said, "As you recommend the writings of Bishop Bull without exception, I presume you approve of his defence of the *damnatory clause* in the *Athanasian* Creed. Indeed you mention this among his most valuable works."* When I wrote this, I did not, to be sure, look into the title-page of the book in order to copy the very words of it; but no person could have any doubt which of Bishop Bull's treatises I really meant, as what I said sufficiently characterized it; and though he does not mention the *Athanasian* Creed in particular, he defends every thing that is harsh and severe in the treatment of *Unitarians* by the *orthodox* in the primitive times, and particularly the anathema annexed to the *Nicene* Creed.

* See *supra*, p. 106.

On this subject, however, you write as follows: "Sir, did you write this in your sleep? Or is it in a dream only that I seem to read it? Bishop Bull's defence of the damnatory clause! From you, Sir, I have now my first information that Bishop Bull ever wrote upon the subject." Then, enumerating the titles of his works, you add, "In these treatises there is no defence of the damnatory clause; nor, that I recollect, any mention of the Athanasian Creed. There is no defence of the damnatory clause in the Sermons and English Tracts, published by Mr. Nelson. Nor can I find any such tract mentioned by Mr. Nelson among the Bishop's lost works; for many small pieces, which it was known that he had written, were never found after his death. Where have I mentioned, Sir, with such high approbation a work which I declare I have never seen, and of which, you will forgive me, if I still doubt the existence?" *

Notwithstanding this ridiculous parade, which hath helped to swell out your book, you might just as well have said, that I never wrote an Answer to your *Charge*, merely because I called my work *Letters to Dr. Horsley;* and I will engage, that whatever doubt *you* might have had, if you had given an order to any bookseller in London in the very words that I used, he would have sent you the *Judicium*,† &c., that is, *The Judgment of the Catholic Church in the three first Centuries, concerning the Necessity of believing that our Lord Jesus Christ is the true God.*‡ Now, Sir, what is implied in the *necessity of believing*, but the condemnation of those who do not believe? The whole truth, and the occasion of all this lamentable outcry is, that, not having the book before me at the time, I said *the damnatory clause in the Athanasian Creed*, instead of *the anathema annexed to the Nicene Creed;* a thing of exactly the same nature.

* *Letters*, pp. 165, 167. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 284, 285.

† "Judicium Ecclesiæ Catholicæ trium priorum Seculorum de Necessitate credendi, quod Dominus noster Jesus Christus sit verus Deus, assertum contra M. Simonem Episcopium aliosque," 1694. See *Biog. Brit.* II. p. 704.

"Mr. Nelson sent this book as a present to M. Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux.—That prelate not only read the work,—but communicated it likewise to several other French Bishops—the result of which was to compliment the author in their name; and Mr. Nelson was desired, in a letter from the Bishop of Meaux, not only to return Dr. Bull his humble thanks, but the unfeigned congratulations also of the whole clergy of France, then assembled at St. Germains, for the great service he had done to the Catholic Church, in so well defending her determination, concerning the necessity of believing the Divinity of the Son of God." *Ibid.*

"The occasion upon which these congratulations were sent, detracts greatly from their value.—To be thanked by a national assembly of Roman Catholic clergy for vindicating anathemas, can confer no true glory on any man. Indeed, it gives us pain to think, that so pious, excellent, and learned a prelate as Dr. Bull, should have applied his abilities to so unhappy a purpose." *Ibid.* p. 707.

‡ "Asserted against Simon Episcopius and others." *Ibid.*

Besides, from your account, one would imagine that, as you declare *yourself* no lover of damnatory clauses, this good bishop, whose writings you so much recommend, was no more a friend to them than yourself, but that he might be the meekest and most candid of all Christians. To give a specimen, therefore, of this most excellent prelate's writings, I shall produce a few passages from the preface of this particular work, from which a judgment may be formed of the *object* and *spirit* of the whole.

Giving a reason for this publication, he says, "There have appeared a few years ago in England many writings of wicked men who have laboured with all their might to overturn the capital article of our creed, on which the hinge of Christianity certainly turns, namely, concerning the Son of God, born of God the Father himself before all ages, very God of very God, by whom all things were made, who for our salvation was incarnate, and made man; some of them impudently defending the Arian, and some the Samosatenian blasphemy."*

He then quotes with approbation, a passage from *Zanchius*, in which he calls the writings of the Unitarians *idle ravings*, "inepta deliria;" and afterwards speaking of *Episcopius* and others, who, though *orthodox* themselves, pleaded for some moderation towards these erring brethren, he calls it "an attempt to reconcile Christ and Belial;" and adds, "These men, professing to hold and believe with the Catholics, (in which I wish they were sincere,) in the truth of the article concerning the co-essential Son of God, yet do not acknowledge the necessity of it."† Then, with respect to their maintaining that the Christian fathers had the same moderation, he says, "It is throwing the greatest reproach upon the doctors, bishops, confessors, and martyrs of the best ages; as if in defending the greatest of all the articles of the Christian religion, they were lukewarm, yea, absolutely cold;—whereas all those churches with one voice and judgment condemned the Arian and Socinian doctrine, as a most pernicious and deadly heresy."‡

* "Prodiere in Anglia nostra, intra paucos abhinc annos, scripta non pauca hominum nefariorum qui dogma fidei nostræ κυριωτατον, in quo certe Christianismi cardo vertitur (de filio nempe Dei ante omnia secula ex ipso Deo patre nato, vero Deo de vero Deo, per quem omnia condita fuere, nostræ salutis causa incarnato, homineque facto) labefactare atque evertere omni ope adnisi sunt; eorum aliis Arianam, aliis vero Samosatenianam blasphemiam impudentur propugnantibus." (*P.*)

† "Hi homines, cum veritatem articuli de co-essentiali Dei filio cum Catholicis se tenere atque credere profiteantur (utinam sincerè) ejusdem tamen necessitatem minime agnoscunt." (*P.*)

‡ "Adeoque consequenter optimorum, seculorum doctoribus, episcopis, con-

He further says that, as in his former works he had defended the *Nicene Creed itself*, so in this, "he maintains and defends the *anathema annexed to it*, viz. those who say that there was a time when the Son of God was not, that he did not exist before he was born, and that he was made out of nothing, or out of any other hypostasis or substance, that he was either created, or subject to change or alteration, the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes."*

He concludes the Preface with saying, "This judgment of the universal church of Christ, in all times, all pious and sober-minded persons will reverence; and therefore will be upon their guard against, and with all their souls abhor, the God-denying heresy of both the Samosatenians and the Arians."†

I need not, surely, go any further into a work of which this is the Preface. I am tempted, however, to quote the form in which the Bishop closes this work, viz., "To the most holy and undivided Trinity, to God the Father, and to his co-essential and co-eternal Word and Son, for our salvation made incarnate, together with the Holy Spirit the comforter, be all praise, honour, and glory, from angels and men, for ever and ever, Amen."‡

Can you read all this, Sir, and not acknowledge that Bishop Bull was a friend to *damnatory* clauses; and if you be not so yourself, as you say you are not, how came you to recommend the writings of this fiery bishop so unreservedly as you have done? And, indeed, how can you be a true member of that church which gives its sanction to these damnatory clauses? Those damnatory clauses are as much an article of faith in the Church of England, as any of the *thirty-nine*, and he that does not *bonâ fide* maintain them, ought, in my opinion, to quit her communion. You, Sir,

fessoribus, martyribus, gravissimam imposuerit contumeliam; quasi scilicet, in tutando capite religionis christianæ omnium maximo, tepidi, imo prorsus frigidi fuissent.——Quam ecclesiæ illæ omnes ut hæresin perniciosissimam ac Ἀναθεματοφορον consentienti calculo ac judicio damnaverunt." (*P.*)

* "In hoc opusculo *αναθεματισμον* symbolo isto annexum tuemur ac defendimus"——*τους δε λεγοντας ην ποτε ὁτι ουκ ην, και πριν γενηθηναι ουκ ην, και εξ ουκ οντων εγενετο, η εξ ἑτερας ὑποστασεως η ουσιας φασκοντας ειναι, η κτιστον, η τρεπτον, η αλλοιωτον τον υἱον του Θεου, τουτους αναθεματιζει ἡ καθολικη και αποστολικη εκκλησια.* (*P.*) See *Biog. Brit.* II. p. 704.

† "Hoc judicium ecclesiæ Christi universalis omnium temporum reverebuntur certe pii ac sobrii omnes, adeoque ab *αρνησιθεῳ* Samosatenianorum simul et Arianorum hæresi cavebunt sibi totoque animo abhorrebunt." *(P.)*

‡ "Sanctissimæ atque individuæ Trinitati, Deo patri, co-essentiali et coæterno Verbo ac Filio, nostræ salutis causa incarnato, una cum Spiritu sancto paracleto, ab angelis et hominibus tribuatur laus, honos, et gloria omnis in secula seculorum, Amen." (*P.*)

therefore, either do, or ought to believe, that myself, and all who think as I do, shall, *without doubt, perish everlastingly.* If you cannot say *amen* to this *curse*, you have no business where you are, and certainly ought not to pronounce it; for this your *Athanasian* Creed asserts, and I suppose no *figure* was intended by the devout composer of it.

The first time that Bishop Bull's writings were recommended to me, was by a Popish priest, in whose company I passed several days at Brussels,* who took serious pains to make me a Roman Catholic, and afterwards wrote to me very earnestly on the subject. But paying too little attention to the recommendation, I was unacquainted with the real character and value of this writer, till it was enforced by the Archdeacon of St. Alban's.

I am, &c.

LETTER XVII.

Of the Light in which the Dissenters are considered by the Archdeacon of St. Alban's, and of the Penalties to which the Unitarians among them are subject.

REV. SIR,

THOUGH you profess yourself to be "no lover of damnatory clauses,† and now and then are pleased to drop some obliging expressions of respect for Dissenters, it is, however, with a considerable mixture of contempt, and with an intimation that we *Unitarian* Dissenters (and all Unitarians, we both agree, either are, or ought to be Dissenters in this country) are subject to many pains and penalties, as the laws now stand. With what view you threw out those hints, and so particularly recite those acts of Parliament, to the penalties of which we are obnoxious, is best known to yourself, and time will perhaps discover.

I had complained of the contempt with which you mentioned the places of worship among Dissenters, when you called them *conventicles.*‡ In your present publication, after something of an apology for using that word, which I think awkward enough, you do not perhaps much mend the matter, by saying, "I could have wished that the use of it had been considered as one of the mere archaisms of my style, in which nothing of insult was intended. I must,

* In 1774. See Vol. I., *Memoirs*, 116.

† *Letters*, p. 165. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 284.

‡ See *Appendix*, No. X.

however, declare, that it would give me particular pleasure to receive conviction that Mr. Lindsey's Meeting-house, and your own, are not more emphatically conventicles in your own sense, that is, in the worst sense of the word. From personal respect for you and him, I should be happy to be assured that you stand not within the danger of the 35th of Eliz. cap. i., or the 17th Ch. II. cap. ii. To the penalties of which, and of other statutes, I must take the liberty to tell you, you are obnoxious, notwithstanding the late act of the 19th of his present Majesty in favour of Dissenters, unless at the quarter sessions of the peace for the county where you live, you have made a certain declaration, which is required by that act, instead of the subscription to articles required by the former acts of toleration. I am sorry, Sir, to inform you, that I find no entry of Mr. Lindsey's declaration in the office of the clerk of the peace, either for the county of Middlesex, or the city of Westminster. Could I make the same inquiry concerning you, (which the distance of your residence prevents,) I fear I should have the mortification to find that you have, no more than your friend, complied with the laws, from which you claim protection. A report prevails, that you both object to the declaration from conscientious scruples. A very sufficient excuse for not making it; but no excuse at all for doing what the law allows not to be done, except upon the express condition that the declaration be previously made." You afterwards say, "Your Meeting-house and his, contrary to your imagination, are illegal, unknown to the laws, and unprotected by them."*

Here, Sir, it is you, and not we, who are mistaken: both our *conventicles*, you will find, are protected, though we ourselves are not. The consequence, therefore, of any prosecution of me (if any person, taking the hint from you, should proceed to it) would be, the depriving of the Dissenters, belonging to the New-Meeting at Birmingham, of one of their present pastors; but the *Meeting-House* would remain under the protection of the law, as much as any of your parish churches, which owe all their consideration to the same law; and would not prevent their choosing another minister, who, if he had more caution than myself, might defy your malice; but the congregation that I serve would think themselves disgraced by a minister of that timid character.

* *Letters*, pp. 167, 169. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 288—290. See *supra*, p. 113.

As you were so very desirous of getting information concerning my conduct in this business, I wonder that you should not have been able to find some person in this neighbourhood, like-minded with yourself, to make the inquiry for you. However, I will save you and your friends that trouble, and perhaps some small expense, by informing you, that as I never made the *subscription* required of all Dissenters before the late act, so neither have I made the *declaration* which that act makes necessary to my legal toleration, nor have I at present any intention to do it.

I shall further inform you and our readers, that when it was first proposed * in *the general body of Dissenting Ministers in or near London*, (of which, as I then resided pretty much in London, I was a member,) whether we should desire our friends in parliament to promote the passing of the bill or not, I was one of those who voted for our continuing in our former situation; but we were over-ruled by a very great majority. The reason for my voting in this manner was, I believe, peculiar to myself. I observed, that I had not, on my own account, any objection to make the declaration proposed in that bill, with the exception of a single circumstance which I then mentioned, and which we all agreed had better be omitted, and which accordingly was struck out before the bill passed into a law; but I said, that I perceived that many persons, for whom I had the greatest respect, had their serious scruples, and such as it was probable they would not be able to overcome; and I thought that the passing of the law, and especially a general compliance with it, would make them more noticed, and perhaps bring them into trouble; whereas, the requisitions of the former law were so unreasonable, that though few, if any of us, had complied with them, it did not appear that any body would ever molest us on that account. For the same reason that I did not then wish for the law to pass, I do not now choose unnecessarily to avail myself of it.

But with respect to myself and many others, the thing is of little consequence. There are laws enow in this country, from the penalties of which the late act would not exempt us. In this happy land of religious liberty and toleration, I am liable, at any time, and without any offence of a civil nature, to have all my goods confiscated, and to be imprisoned for life.† But though I think these laws most

* In 1772. See Vol. X. pp. 492, 493.

† It is generally understood that *Unitarians*, since 1813, have been released by Mr. Smith's Bill from such liability. *Unbelievers*, who have the zeal and honesty

absurd and unreasonable, and that, as a man who has not disturbed the peace of his neighbours, I am entitled to all the rights of other citizens; so that I neither ought to be molested on account of my own religion, nor compelled to contribute to the support of that of another person, any more than to pay his physician; I think myself happy, considering how much more unfriendly to truth civil governments and civil governors have been, that I am not exposed to all the difficulties and hazards that the apostles were exposed to; and when I cannot obtain a legal *toleration*, I am very thankful for a *connivance*.

You say, that "conscientious scruples are no excuse at all for doing what the law allows not to be done."* In this you totally mistake the ground of my conduct. I do not pretend that it is authorized by the laws of this, or of any country. It is enough for me if I think myself justified by the *laws of God;* and whether I ought to *obey God or man*, in this case, do you yourself judge.

What would you yourself advise us *Unitarians* in this country to do? We have heard again and again all that you have to say in defence of your Trinitarian notions and Trinitarian worship, without any approach towards conviction, and yet we think it our duty to make a public profession of our Unitarian principles, and to adopt an Unitarian form of worship. Would you seriously say, we ought, with the views of things that we really have, to keep our opinions to ourselves, and have no public worship at all? And yet between this conduct and our acting more or less openly in opposition to you, and incurring the penalties of the laws now in force against us, there is no medium.

If you really be a friend to any thing that deserves the name of *toleration*, you must feel for the disgrace of your country, on account of the unjust and impolitic restraints the laws of it lay upon us, and you will use your endeavours to promote the repeal of *all penal laws in matters of religion*, and likewise to lay open all civil offices to all persons who are qualified to fill them; which, indeed, is no more than is already done in several countries in Europe. That those who prefer the mode of religion now established, should bear the whole expense of it, without compelling us to as-

to promulgate their opinions, and thus to impugn the Jewish or Christian revelations, are still exposed, "in this happy land of religious liberty and toleration," and "without any offence of a civil nature," to confiscations and imprisonments, inflicted by civil tribunals, to any extent, according to the arbitrary discretion of Judges. See Vol. X. p. 495, *Note;* XIV. p. 514, *Note* **.

* *Letters*, p. 168. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 289.

sist them in it, while they do nothing for ours in return, though a thing perfectly reasonable, is more than I expect the Archdeacon of St. Alban's to countenance. I, however, live in the firm belief that even this will take place some time or other; and my belief is grounded on this general and glorious truth, that there is a wise and good Being at the head of all affairs, bringing good out of all evil. I therefore believe that good will finally take place of all evil, and, consequently, equity of injustice.

You, Sir, as Archdeacon of St. Alban's, may believe that the Church of England will continue to the end of the world, and that *all nations* (at least all that speak the English language, and can read the book of Common Prayer in the original) *will flow into it.* On the other hand, it is my firm persuasion, that when *Babylon the great, the mother of harlots*, shall fall, all her *daughters*, all the *little Babylons*, all the *lesser establishments*, of what I deem to be corrupt Christianity, will fall with her, or soon after her; and, therefore, I apply to them, as well as to the Church of *Rome*, that awful warning, *Rev.* xviii. 4, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."*

While we *Unitarians* behave as good subjects, (and I do not know that we are worse thought of than other Dissenters in this respect,) I have such confidence in the good sense of my countrymen, though without any particular obligation to yourself on this account, and in the spirit of the times, (which, throughout all Europe, is daily more favourable to freedom of inquiry and toleration, and less favourable to old and corrupt, though venerable establishments,) that I have little doubt but that I shall be suffered to proceed as I have hitherto done, unmolested, promoting by every means in my power what I deem to be important *truth*, though our legislators in the last century voted it to be *heresy* and *blasphemy*. What our present legislative body, if the question was brought before them, would decree, is unknown; but I am pretty confident, that when the subject shall come properly before them, (and this may be pretty soon,) they will be disposed to hear reason and to do justice.†

* See, on *vers.* 9, 10, Vol. XIV. p. 495.

† "The learned writer was mistaken in expecting that he should be permitted to proceed unmolested in his defence of important truth, having been driven from his pastoral charge by the disgraceful Riots at Birmingham, in July, 1791, when his house was burned to the ground, and his laboratory, his library, and his papers, were destroyed. He was right, however, in his expectation of the increasing liberality of succeeding times: the penal laws against the impugners of the doctrine of

From what you say of your own freedom of inquiry, one would think that you might have treated us Dissenters with a little more respect. For, after observing that you "was much at home in the Greek language," and that you "had redde the ecclesiastical historians," you add, "I had been many years in the habits of thinking for myself upon a variety of subjects, before I opened Dr. Clarke's book. There is in most men a culpable timidity; you and I, perhaps, have overcome that general infirmity; but there is in most men a culpable timidity which inclines them to be easily overawed by the authority of great names."* It will make some persons smile to see you, Sir, groupe yourself with me upon this occasion; and they may ask for similar evidence of your having overcome this culpable timidity, and of your having really thought for yourself, when they see you professing to believe, and complying with every thing that those who do not think for themselves at all, profess to believe and comply with. Your profound admiration of Bishop Bull's writings is no proof of your thinking for yourself. All that can be inferred from it is, that you have made a wise choice of masters. The writer for whom I always profess the greatest admiration is Dr. Hartley, but I differ from him in many things, and things also of great consequence.

If, however, you still retain the habit of thinking for yourself, allow me to return your civility to me, when you joined my name to those of *Bolingbroke*, *Voltaire*, and *Gibbon*,† by adding yours also to this list of *free inquirers*, and your sentence will then close thus,—*a Gibbon, a Priestley, or a Horsley.*

For my own part, I cannot say that I much dislike my situation in the light in which I view the different characters; since I find myself placed between an *unbeliever* on the one hand, and a *high churchman* on the other. *Medio tutissimus ibis.*

I am, &c.

the Trinity having been totally repealed by a bill introduced into Parliament by Mr. Smith, the upright member for Norwich, in July, 1813, which passed without any opposition through both houses." Mr. Belsham's *Note*. See *supra*, p. 257, *Note* †.

* *Letters*, p. 163. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 282.

† *Letters*, p. 164. *(P.)* "——and while they" (whom Dr. Horsley had before denominated *fools*) "thus trample on the accumulated authority of ages, with an idiot simplicity they suffer themselves to be ledde by the meer name of the writer of the day, a Bolingbroke, a Voltaire, a Gibbon, or a Priestley; as if they thought to become wise and learned by taking a share and an interest in the follies or the party-views of men of abilities and learning." *Tracts*, pp. 282, 283.

LETTER XVIII.

Of the Charge of wilful Misrepresentation, &c.

REV. SIR,

As both yourself and your *great and good ally*, Mr. Badcock, have employed so much of your respective publications on the subject of *perversions*, *wilful misrepresentations*, *artifice*, *management*, &c. &c. &c., (for you are at no loss for words or phrases of this import,) it may not be improper to give you one short Letter on that subject.

I was willing to hope that, in this second publication, you would have observed the rules of decency and of probability in your charges against me, and that you might have expressed some little concern for your former violations of them. But I am sorry to find that, instead of retracting any thing, you have considerably added to your offences of this kind. You had before charged me with knowingly misquoting the English translation of the Bible, when, in fact, I should not have gained any thing by it. You now talk of my designedly omitting a "very significant adjective,"* as you say, in a quotation from *Athanasius*, when I neither intended to quote nor to translate the passage, but only referred to, and gave the general sense of it;† and this, I doubt not, was the true one. Yet upon this you raise loud exclamations concerning *truth*, *candour*, *consistency*, and *dealing in sarcasms*.‡

You also think, with Mr. Badcock, that I really meant to conceal from the unlearned, part of a quotation from *Justin Martyr*, which I printed in *Greek* at full length, and this in a public controversy with yourself, of whose vigilance in this respect I could not entertain a doubt. "The entire passage," you say, "as long as it appears not in your translation, lay innocently enough in the Greek, at the bottom of your page."§ But I must have been an *idiot* indeed, in plain English, and something worse than the *idiota* of Ter-

* *Letters*, p. 5. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 89.

† See, on *Dionysius* and *Athanasius*, Vol. V. p. 46.

‡ "Thus," says Dr. Horsley "you procure yourself a fine opportunity of introducing an oblique sarcastic stroke at Athanasius.—Surely truth, candour, and consistency, are conspicuous in the writings of our modern Unitarians, and the Archdeacon of St. Alban's is the only writer of the age who deals in sarcasms!" *Tracts*, p. 89.

§ *Letters*, p. 88. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 184. See *supra*, pp. 65, 129, 130, 141.

tullian, as well as the *homo nefarius* of Bishop Bull,* to have attempted a deception in these circumstances.

As, in another place, you speak more fully on the subject of my artifice and insincerity, and enlarge upon the nature of it, and the degree of its guilt in controversial writings, I shall produce the passage at length, and then give a general answer to it.

"Indeed, Sir," you say, "in quoting ancient authors, when you have understood the original, which in many instances is not the case, you have too often been guilty of much reserve and management. This appears in some instances in which you cannot pretend that your own inadvertency, or your printer's, hath given occasion to unmerited imputations. I wish that my complaints upon this head had been groundless: but in justice to my own cause I could not suffer unfair quotations to pass undetected. I am unwilling to draw any conclusion from this unseemly practice against the general probity of your character; but you must allow me to lament, that men of integrity, in the service of what they think a good end, should indulge themselves so freely as they often do in the use of unjustifiable means. Time was when the practice was openly avowed, and Origen himself was among its defenders. The art which he recommended he scrupled not to employ. I have produced an instance in which, to silence an adversary, he hath recourse to the wilful and deliberate allegation of a notorious falsehood. You have gone no such length as this. I think you may believe me sincere, when I speak respectfully of your worth and integrity, notwithstanding that I find occasion to charge you with some degree of blame, in a sort in which the great character of Origen was more deeply infected. Would to God it had been otherwise. Would God I could with truth have boasted, 'To these low arts stooped Origen, but my contemporary, my great antagonist, disdains them.' How would it have heightened the pride of victory, could I have found a fair occasion to be thus the herald of my adversary's praise!"†

All these, Sir, and such like charges of artful, and, therefore, highly criminal misrepresentation, (for they cannot amount to any thing less, notwithstanding all your qualifying clauses,) which you and Mr. Badcock are perpetually

* See *supra*, p. 253, *Note*.

† *Letters*, p. 159. *(P.) Tracts*, pp. 277, 278.

urging, are in their own nature too absurd to gain any credit, and, therefore, can only shew, that what you want in *argument*, you are willing to make up some other way. I have completely vindicated the character of *Origen*, which you have endeavoured to blot; and as to *myself*, you are quite at liberty to think of me just as you please. I am not conscious of any unfairness whatever in any part of my proceedings, but have a perfect willingness to bring before the public every thing that may enable them to form a true judgment on the subject of this controversy. If I knew of any circumstance favourable to your argument, I would produce it as readily as I should do any thing in favour of my own; and I am as willing to detect my own mistakes as you or any person can be to do it for me. For this I appeal to the tenor of all my writings, and to my general character, which I will venture to say is as fair as yours.

You are pleased, indeed, to balance the account of my wilful misrepresentations, &c., with an allowance for "the general probity of *my* character," and "a cordial esteem and affection for the virtues of it," which, you say, "I believe to be great and amiable."* What you know of my private character I cannot tell, but I suppose not much; and I shall not attempt to balance your account in the same manner; for really of your private character I know but little, either good or evil; and therefore I presume the former, though the liberties you have taken as a *writer* are not very favourable to that presumption. But this kind of apology is absurd; and had I thought you or Mr. Badcock capable of the things with which you charge me, I should not say that "your virtues were either great or amiable."

By way of softening those charges, which materially affect my *moral character*, you sometimes (though it makes a poor compensation for defects of a moral nature) introduce compliments (whether sincerely or ironically is equally indifferent to me) respecting *merit of a philosophical kind*. These also, for want of information, I am unable to return. For if I were asked what improvements in science the world owes to you, I really could not tell; and I think it is very possible, that, in fact, you are as much a stranger to my pursuits as I am to yours. By this I do not mean to insinuate that you have no merit as a *mathematician*, to which you make high pretensions; but though for some years I applied pretty closely to the study of pure mathematics, and

* *Letters*, p. 160. *(P.)* *Tracts*, pp. 276, 277.

was thought to have made some proficiency in them, it was when I had not the means of employing my time as I now do, so that I give but little attention to those matters. Whatever may be the case with you, I find that if I particularly cultivate one branch of knowledge, it must be at the expense of others. I have, therefore, made my choice of the different objects of pursuit, and shall hardly change it now, except, as I get older, to circumscribe my studies still more.

If any thing would justify a retort of such charges of unfairness, it would be your readiness, upon every slight occasion, to bring them against me. For we do not easily suspect others of what we feel we are incapable of ourselves. But as I am conscious of the utmost fairness in my own conduct, I cannot lightly believe the contrary of others.

As I observed to Mr. Venn, in the first theological controversy in which I engaged,* "It behoves us carefully to distinguish between a *latent insincerity*," (the nature and causes of which I there explain,) "under the influence of which men deceive themselves, and that *direct prevarication*, with which those who are engaged in debate are too ready to charge one another, as if their adversaries knowingly concealed or opposed the truth. This is a crime of so heinous a nature, that I should be very unwilling to impute it to any person whatever." I am, therefore, unwilling to charge it on you or Mr. Badcock, notwithstanding some appearances might seem to justify me in it.

I am the most puzzled to account for the strange and improbable history that you, Sir, have given of a church of orthodox Jews at *Jerusalem* after the time of *Adrian*, and the series of historical *facts*, as you have the assurance to call them, for which it is not possible that you should have any authority in ancient or even in modern writers; and yet had you yourself been present at the surrender of the place, and had drawn up the terms of capitulation, you could not have given a more distinct and positive account. But the fact, I believe, was, that, without any examination of your own, you took it for granted from the authority of *Mosheim*, (who had no authority for it himself,) that one leading circumstance was true, and then concluded that the other circumstances which you have added, and therefore *knew* that you added, must have been so too. On this you have not hesitated to relate the whole in one continued *nar-*

* In 1769. See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 97.

rative, just as if you had been copying from some historian of the time; and *Origen*, who lived in those times, and in the very country, and whose veracity was never questioned before, is treated without ceremony as a *wilful liar*, because he has given a different account of things.*

As it has been very much my object to trace *effects* to their *causes*, and I consider the human mind, and consequently all human actions, to be subject to *laws* as regular as those which operate in my laboratory, (for want of knowing or attending to which Mr. Gibbon has egregiously failed in his account of the causes of the spread of Christianity, and you in this controversy,) I had framed an *hypothesis* to account for Mr. Badcock's censure of what I said concerning *Eusebius;* but not being quite satisfied with it, I rejected it. However, notwithstanding strong appearances, I am still willing to hope that the misrepresentation, though exceedingly gross, was not directly wilful.

I am, &c.

LETTER XIX.

Miscellaneous Articles, and the Conclusion.

Rev. Sir,

Disposed as you are to make the most of every trifling oversight that you can discover in my *History*, and of every concession that I make to you, I still have no objection to acknowledge any *real mistake* that I have fallen into, important or unimportant; and I shall certainly correct all such in any future edition of my work; and likewise, as far as I am able, in the translations that are making of it into foreign languages.† I shall now make *two* acknowledg-

* "The learned writer is under a mistake in supposing that Dr. Horsley *invented* the circumstances relating to the church at *Ælia*. The fact is, and the Archdeacon confesses it in his Reply to these Letters, *Part* ii. *Chap.* ii., [*Tracts*, pp. 362—377,] that he did copy these circumstances from the note in Mosheim's *Commentaries*, &c. to which he refers. But Dr. Priestley at that time not having access to this work, consulted only Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, in which *Mosheim* had with great discretion omitted many of those circumstances which he had introduced into his *Commentaries*, and which had no foundation but in his own imagination, as the Archdeacon afterwards found to his great disappointment and chagrin. And the remainder of this controversy is occupied chiefly in elaborate and ingenious but unsuccessful efforts to extricate himself from the difficulties in which he had involved himself by hastily adopting the unfounded positions and calumnies of Mosheim." Mr. Belsham's *Note*. See *supra*, pp. 169, *Note* *, 176, *Notes* * and ‡.

† One of these was, probably, the German, as a friend informs me from his recollection of a conversation with the author. The *History*, burnt at *Dort* in 1785, (see Vol. V. p. 13, *Note,)* was, probably, a translation.

ments, and let our readers judge of their importance; and how little my *History* loses for want of being perfectly correct in those particulars.

I. I had said that "Valesius was of opinion that the history of Hegesippus was neglected and lost, because it was observed to favour the Unitarian doctrine;" whereas I should have said, "on account of the errors which it contained, and that those errors could not be supposed to be any other than those of the Unitarians;"* and if I had consulted the passage at the time, I certainly should have expressed myself in that more cautious manner. But of what consequence is this circumstance to my great argument? Mr. Badcock, having looked for the passage to which I refer, and not being able to find it, seems to have imagined that I had no such passage to produce. He therefore, after his insolent manner, challenges me to produce it, and to *put him to shame.* That I believe to be impossible, otherwise it would have been effectually done in my *Remarks on the Monthly Review;* at least, by my notice of his most shameful conduct with respect to my censure of *Eusebius*,† of which he says nothing at all in his *Letter to me.*‡ I suppose he thought it *not to be regarded.* However, the passage which I refer to, and which sufficiently answers my purpose, is as follows: "Moreover, those books of Clement contained a short and compendious exposition of both the Testaments, as Photius, in his *Bibliotheca*, witnesses; but on account of the errors with which they abounded, being negligently kept, they were at length lost; nor was there any other reason, in my opinion, why the books of Papias, Hegesippus, and others of the ancients, are now lost."§

You, Sir, however, have observed this passage, and you say, "Valesius hath indeed expressed an opinion that the work of Hegesippus was neglected by the ancients on account of errors which it contained. But what the errors might be which might occasion this neglect, is a point upon which Valesius is silent. And what right have you to suppose that the Unitarian doctrine was the error which Valesius

* See Vol. V. p. 17, where the passage is amended according to the Author's *corrections.*

† *Supra*, pp. 135, 136. ‡ See *supra*, p. 142, *Note* *.

§ "Porro ii Clementis libri continebant brevem et compendiariam utriusque testamenti expositionem, ut testatur Photius in *Bibliotheca.* Ob errores autem quibus scatebant, negligentius habiti, tandem perierunt. Nec alia, meo quidem judicio, causa est, cur Papiæ et Hegesippi, aliorumque veterum libri, interciderint." *In Euseb. Hist.* L. v. C. xi. (*P.*)

ascribed to Hegesippus more than to Clemens Alexandrinus, upon whose last work of the Hypotyposes he passes the same judgment?"*

I answer, that there were no errors of any consequence ascribed to that early age, besides those of the *Gnostics* and of the *Unitarians*. The former certainly were not those that *Valesius* could allude to with respect to *Hegesippus*, because this writer mentions the *Gnostics* very particularly as heretics, but makes no mention of Unitarians at all; though they certainly existed, and I doubt not constituted the great body of unlearned Christians in his time, which is one circumstance that, together with his being a *Jewish Christian*, (all of whom are expressly said to have been *Ebionites*, and none of them to have believed the divinity of Christ,) leads me to conclude that he was an Unitarian himself. Though *Clemens Alexandrinus* was not an Unitarian, yet he never calls Unitarians *heretics;* and since in his accounts of *heretics in general*, which are pretty frequent in his works, he evidently means the *Gnostics only*, and therefore virtually excludes Unitarians from that description of men; it is by no means improbable but that, in those writings of his which are lost, he might have said things directly in favour of Unitarians.

In this passage *Valesius* also mentions the writings of *Papias* as having, in his opinion, been lost for the same reason. Now *Papias* has certainly been supposed to be an *Ebionite*. Mr. Whiston has made this very probable from a variety of circumstances.† In the same tract he gives his reasons for supposing *Hegesippus* to have been an *Ebionite*, and he expresses his wonder, "that he should have had the good fortune to be so long esteemed by the learned for a Catholic."‡ In this Mr. Whiston may be supposed to have been sufficiently impartial, as he was an *Arian*, and expresses great dislike of the *Ebionites;* as, indeed, Arians always have done.

I also acknowledge that I ought not to have exempted *Epiphanius* (as you have observed, though with more severity than the case required) from the impropriety of charging *Noetus* with being a *Patripassian*.§ But this also is a circumstance of as little consequence to the main argument as the former, though my negligence with respect to it, I

* *Letters*, p. 4. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 86, 87.
† See his *Account of the ceasing of Miracles*, p. 18. (*P.*)
‡ *Ibid.* p. 21. (*P.*)
§ *Letters*, p. 4. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 87, 88.

frankly own, was greater. I had myself discovered the mistake, and should have corrected it,* if your letters to me had never appeared. That the *Patripassian* notion was injuriously charged upon the Unitarians of antiquity is sufficiently shewn by *Beausobre*, who was himself a Trinitarian and a man of learning if ever there was one. This charge was so common that, without any proper evidence whatever, all the *Unitarians* are called *Patripassians* by one writer or other. *Optatus* even says that *Ebion*, the supposed father of the *Ebionites*, was a *Patripassian*,† though no early writer who mentions the Ebionites says any such thing of them.

I must, however, acknowledge that you have one just cause of triumph over me, and all the friends of free inquiry; but this also, as with respect to every other advantage which you have gained, you exult in too much, and make too great account of. The *Monthly Review*, which was formerly in our favour, is now completely yours. Your *Charge*, which contains the highest *orthodoxy*, and discovers the greatest spirit of *church authority* of any production in this age, has been examined before that tribunal, and been honoured with an unqualified approbation.‡ And as to your present publication, which has no less merit of the same kind, its praises, I doubt not, are already *sung*, or at least *set to music*, and the whole choir of Reviewers, who have been unanimous in their condemnation of me, are ready to join the chorus on this occasion.

You plead your right to make the most of this your new acquisition; and in this you think yourself justified by my conduct in the publication of small and cheap pamphlets, for the purpose of disseminating my principles among the lower and poorer class of people,§ though, in my opinion, the two cases are very different indeed. This post, however, which we were once in possession of, you and your friends have now got, and it is not to be supposed that you will ask our leave what use to make of it; so that we must yield with as good a grace as we can, and endeavour to make our ground good elsewhere.

II. One of your curious proofs of my *ignorance*, and of my being entirely unqualified to write the *history of early times*,

* The passage is now amended, according to the author's corrections. See Vol. V. p. 50.

† "Ut Hebion qui argumentabatur Patrem passum esse, non Filium." L. iv. p. 91. (*P.*)

‡ See *Mon. Rev.* 1783, LXIX. p. 402.

§ *Letters*, p. 78. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 179, 180. See *supra*, p. 240.

is my not being acquainted with the opinions of some *modern writers*, and those either difficult to procure, or such as could have been of little use to me, if I had known them. I acknowledged that I had not heard of *Daniel Zwicker;* I did not know what *Episcopius*, *Petavius*, or *Huetius* thought on a particular subject, and I had not read your great authority, Bishop Bull. "What is this," you say, "but to confess that you are indeed little redde in the principal writers, either on your own side of the question or the opposite? But as no man, I presume, is born with an intuitive knowledge of the opinions, or the facts, of past ages, the historian of religious corruptions, confessing himself unredde in the polemical divines, confesses ignorance of his subject."* "You repel the imputation of plagiarism, by the most disgraceful confession of ignorance, to which foiled polemic ever was reduced."†

Now the probability is, that my reading in polemical divinity is much more extensive than yours. But if it had been ten times greater than it is, I do not know whether, instead of being advantageous, it might not have been of disservice to me, in ascertaining the state of things in the early ages, to the knowledge of which these authors had no better access than myself. You yourself, I am pretty confident, have formed your opinions on these subjects chiefly from modern writers; and it has been by this means, and by the help of your fertile imagination, as I have shewn, that you have been so miserably misled as you have been.

III. You and Mr. Badcock both pride yourselves in your knowledge of the Greek language, and you insult me, and my *Vindicator*, for our ignorance of it. But to criticize others is the easiest road to fame. In the same way you might set yourself up even against "a Casaubon, a Scaliger, or a Bentley," to whom you acknowledge that you "stand bowing at a distance:"‡ for the greatest scholars sometimes make great mistakes.

Out of the number of citations that I have made, is it extraordinary that two or three, and those of no great consequence, should have been found in some degree faulty? You and your ally have had no occasion to produce many, and, writing in controversy, would naturally be more guarded; and yet your errors in this way far exceed mine. Concerning one of these, you say, the "words are so very

* *Letters*, p. 7. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 91, 92.
† *Ibid.* p. 95.
‡ *Letters*, p. 58. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 203.

clear, that the sense was hardly to be missed at first sight, by a school-boy in the second year of Greek."* What, then, will be said of the man who can translate *idiota*, *idiot*, who can argue from οὗτος as necessarily referring to *a person*, (for if this was not your meaning, it was impertinent to allege it at all,) and censure me for rendering ουκ αλλῳ τινι η by *to nothing but?* And what can you say in excuse for your learned ally translating αλλοι γαρ κατ' αλλον τροπον, *others upon another plan*, instead of *some in one way and others in another*, on which he founds the most improbable and malignant of all his accusations against me, for *concealment*, *wilful perversion*, &c.? And what can you say for the apology he has made for his blunder, when he only allows that *the words may be more accurately rendered* as I have done; whereas, every person who is at all acquainted with Greek, must know that, in that connexion, and especially if the force of the particle γαρ be attended to, the phrase will not bear any other rendering? A writer who assumes so much as he has done, and who has treated my *Vindicator*, on the subject of *Greek*, with a degree of insolence that exceeds any thing that I have met with, and yet has himself blundered in this manner, ought to *kiss the rod*, if not, without a figure, to *feel* it, and *take shame to himself*. His friends, however, if he have any, must blush for him.

Though from the age of seventeen to twenty-seven, I believe, I read as much *Greek* as almost any man can be supposed to have read in the same time, and after that taught it nine years, the last six of them at Warrington, and chiefly the higher Greek classics, (for the elements of the language were not taught in that academy,) I do not pretend ever to have been properly *at home* in the language; I mean, so as to read it with the same ease with which it is common to read *Latin* or *French;* (indeed I have not yet met with any man who pretended that he could do this;) and having given less attention to that language since I have had the means of employing my time better, your Scotch correspondent may be right in observing, that I am but "very moderately skilled in Greek,"† and at my time of life, my acquaintance with it is not likely to improve. However, such as it is, I shall make the best use that I can of it in the *larger work* on

* *Letters*, p. 15. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 101.

† *Letters*, p. 182. (*P.*) This remark is among "Short Strictures,—by an unknown Hand." *Tracts*, pp. 300, 301. Dr. Townson was the writer, according to Mr. Nichols's *Lit. Anec.* 1812, IV. p. 680. The Scotch Correspondent was Dr. Horsley's "maternal uncle, Dr. Hamilton." See *Tracts*, p. 161.

which I am now employed. It is possible, however, that I might make but a bad exchange of the remains of my *Greek* literature for yours, or that of your Scotch correspondent.

IV. You are pleased to make some apology for your *haughty style*, and the contemptuous airs you gave yourself, both with respect to Dissenters, and to your own inferior Clergy. To what I observed on this subject, you now say, "It might be a sufficient, and not an unbecoming reply, to remind you that I spoke *ex cathedra*, and hold myself accountable for the advice which I gave, to no human judicature, except the KING, the metropolitan, and my diocesan. This would indeed, be the only answer which I should condescend to give to any one for whom I retained not, under all our differences, a very considerable degree of personal esteem. But as Dr. Priestley is my adversary, in some points I could wish to set him right, and in some I desire to explain."*

A great part of this apology was, indeed, Sir, quite unnecessary, as no person can read your *Charge* and doubt your having delivered it *ex cathedra*. The inferior, the *far inferior* clergy, to whom it was addressed, were, I presume, fully sensible of it. The only question is, whether you ever think that you are not speaking *ex cathedra?* Please, however, to remember that I am not one of those to whom you have any right to speak in that manner, and that I do not hold myself accountable to any metropolitan, or diocesan, or even to the King, or any person or potentate on earth, in matters of religion. Also while I have "credit enough to collect," or to find, "a congregation,"† I shall preach, without applying to your church, or the Church of Rome, for *Holy Orders;* and I shall think my *conventicle* as reputable a place for preaching as any of your *churches;* though you think it *arrogant* in me to make the comparison between them.‡

V. I can hardly believe that I am living in the close of the eighteenth century, when I read what you say in this publication concerning the *dignity and the power of the priesthood*, derived "by regular succession"§ from the apostles, and of course through the Popes, and find that you seriously disallow of my authority to exercise the sacred function, &c. As a curiosity, in the year 1784, I am

* *Letters*, p. 158. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 275, 276.

† *Letters*, p. 171. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 293.

‡ *Letters*, p. 169. (*P.*) "— the arrogance," says Dr. Horsley, "with which you presume to set your conventicles upon a footing with our own churches." *Tracts*, p. 291. See *supra*, p. 114.

§ *Letters*, p. 171. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 293.

tempted to give my reader a pretty long extract from your work, on this subject. After enumerating the mischiefs that you say you have seen in your own country, in the course of your own life, you add, "When I consider that the root of all those evils has been the prevalency of a principle, of which you seem disposed to be an advocate, that every man who hath credit enough to collect a congregation has a right, over which the magistrate cannot without tyranny exercise controul, to celebrate divine worship, according to his own form, and to propagate his own opinions; I am inclined to be jealous of a principle which hath proved, I had almost said, so ruinous; and I lean the more to the opinion, that the commission of a ministry, perpetuated by regular succession, is something more than a dream of cloystered gownmen, or a tale imposed upon the vulgar, to serve the ends of avarice and ambition. For, whatever confusion human folly may admit, a divine institution must have within itself a provision for harmony and order. And, upon these principles, though I wish that all indulgence should be shewn to tender consciences, and will ever be an advocate for the largest toleration that may be consistent with political wisdom, being indeed persuaded, that the restraints of human laws must be used with the greatest gentleness and moderation to be rendered means of strengthening the bonds of Christian peace and amity; yet I could wish to plant a principle of severe restraint in the consciences of men. I could wish that the importance of the ministerial office were considered; that the practice of antiquity were regarded; and that it might not seem a matter of perfect indifference to the laity, to what house of worship they resort. I cannot admit that every assembly of grave and virtuous men, in which grave and virtuous men take upon them to officiate, is to be dignified with the appellation of a church," &c.*

That these doctrines, which will justify all the violence of the Church of Rome, and which condemn the Reformation, should be maintained by a Protestant divine at this day is rather extraordinary. I can almost fancy that the dial of *Ahaz* has once more gone back, and brought us to the time of Dr. Sacheverel, if not that of Archbishop Laud. But were I, in my turn, to make an enumeration of the complicated mischiefs that have arisen both to the cause of Christianity and the peace of society, from *church establishments*,

* *Letters*, pp. 170, 171. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 292, 293.

(but it would be digressing too far from the object of this controversy to do it,) it would soon appear that it was high time that this boasted *alliance between the* CHURCH and the STATE was entirely broken; as it has proved infinitely injurious to both the contracting parties, though occasionally useful to those *churchmen* and *statesmen* who, to serve the purposes of their own ambition, had drawn the contract.

When I contemplate the dignity you assume as *Archdeacon*, and the high tone of your whole performance, superior to any thing *on my shelves*, I wonder that you should profess any respect for tender consciences at all. I find, however, that the respect you profess for Dissenters is only for those who are *favoured by the laws;* so that our obligations to you are not great; nor do you think there is any impropriety in the restraints of human laws in matters of religion, only you would have them used "with the greatest gentleness and moderation."* How far this *gentleness and moderation* would go, if you really thought the church in danger, I cannot tell. I am, therefore, happy that you are so easy on that account, as you represent yourself.†

You are pleased, however, though in no perfect consistence with what you say of the *powers of the priesthood*, as derived by succession from the apostles, to say, "You will remember that I make the learning and the piety of her clergy, of which ample monuments are extant, the basis of her pre-eminence."‡ I have no disposition to detract from the learning or the piety there may be among you; but as you celebrate your own praises, I will take the liberty to observe, that, allowance being made for your superior numbers and superior advantages, with respect to conveniences for study, from which, by a policy as weak as it is illiberal, you exclude Dissenters, (thinking, perhaps, to make us despicable, by keeping us in ignorance,) I do not think that the body of Dissenting ministers, with all their disadvantages, need be afraid of a comparison with you; and candid persons among the clergy have acknowledged the benefit you have derived from us; not to say that you are indebted to us for some of your great ornaments, as *Tillotson*, *Butler*, and *Secker*.

In what you say of Dr. Chandler, (whose infirmity and,

* *Letters*, p. 171. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 293.

† *Letters*, p. 8. (*P.*) "My alarms," says Dr. Horsley, "(if I ever felt alarm) for the Catholic faith, or for the national establishment, as in danger from your attacks, must now be laid asleep." *Tracts*, p. 92.

‡ *Letters*, p. 161. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 278.

I may add, whose misfortune, it was to pay too much court to leading men both in the church and in the state,) viz. that he preferred the Church of England to any other establishment of Christianity,* it would be no great compliment from me if I should say it after him. But I really cannot do it; and if I could adopt your idea of the transmission of the powers of the priesthood from the apostles, and was to conform to any establishment, I should choose to be a member of a much older and more venerable establishment than yours, and in which the claim to that valuable succession should be less liable to litigation.

As to yourself in particular, who are so proud of being *a churchman*, it would have been happy for the public, and likewise a particular satisfaction to myself, if you had had a greater share of that *learning* of which you think your church possessed. More information would then have been given to our readers by both of us; and at least I might have been able to say, with the person who examined Dr. Clarke,† *Probe me, exercuisti.* All I can now say is, that I have made some use of your *ignorance*, though I should have made more of your *knowledge*, to throw light on the subject of our discussion. My task has been much too easy; but I would willingly have done more if there had been any occasion for it, or indeed a propriety in it.

I am, Sir, your very humble servant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

Birmingham, September, 1784.

* *Letters*, p. 161. *(P.)* "I have heard," says Dr. Horsley, "from very good authority, of a conversation that passed between the late Dr. Chandler and a clergyman of the Church of Scotland, in which Chandler was a warm advocate for the constitution of the Church of England, in preference to any of the reformed Churches." *Tracts*, p. 278.

† In 1709, on taking his degree of D. D. at Cambridge, where "he performed a remarkable public exercise." His *thesis* was on this question, "*Nullum Fidei Christianæ dogma, in S. Scripturis traditum, est rectæ rationi dissertaneum;* i. e. No Article of Christian Faith, delivered in the Holy Scripture, is disagreeable to right reason." The compliment was paid to Dr. Clarke by "Dr. James, then Royal Professor of Divinity, a very learned and acute disputant." See *Biog. Brit.* III. pp. 599, 600; *Gen. Biog. Dict.* III. pp. 413, 414. Some passages in this "public exercise" produced Dr. Bentley's *Tetrastick*, on the Professor, *Whiston*, and *Clarke*. See Whiston's *Hist. Mem. of Clarke*, Ed. 3, 1730, p. 14.

LETTERS TO Dr. HORSLEY,

PART III.

Containing

AN ANSWER

TO

*HIS REMARKS ON LETTERS, PART II.**

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

STRICTURES ON MR. HOWES'S NINTH NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS ON BOOKS, ANCIENT AND MODERN.

Infelix! quæ tanta animum dementia cepit!
Non vires alias, conversaque numina sentis? VIRGIL.

[*Birmingham*, 1786.]

PREFACE.

WHEN, in the advertisement of my *History of early Opinions concerning Christ*, I pledged myself to shew that Dr. Horsley's *Remarks* on my Letters to him were "as defective in argument as they are in temper," I did not mean that I would animadvert upom them *immediately*, or very soon; but intended to wait till I should hear what would be objected to that larger work, and then reply to him and others at the same time. I found, however, that the advertisement had raised a general expectation of a *speedy* reply to Dr. Horsley in particular; and being unwilling to disappoint any expectations I had even unintentionally excited, and more unwilling to appear desirous of shrinking from this discussion, I have done at present what many of my friends will probably think might as well have been deferred a while longer.

Besides, as Dr. Horsley's Remarks were written before he had seen my large History, I thought it might not be amiss, in this manner, to close *the first act in our drama*; the *second* being reserved for what may be occasioned by that work, which will probably be much more considerable than any

* "Remarks upon Dr. Priestley's Second Letters to the Archdeacon of St. Alban's, with proofs of certain facts asserted by the Archdeacon." Reprinted in "Tracts in Controversy with Dr. Priestley," 1789, pp. 333—411.

thing that has been produced by the *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*. And my design (after the termination of the present discussion with Dr. Horsley, which must soon come to an issue) is, to wait a year or two, till I see what the publication of my large work on this subject shall produce, and then to reply to all my opponents at once; frankly acknowledging any mistakes I shall appear to have fallen into, and vindicating whatever I shall think capable of it, and deserving it.*

Agreeably to this scheme, I have annexed to these *Letters* some *Remarks* on the Ninth Number of Mr. Howes's *Observations on Books, ancient and modern*, in which he has begun his attack upon me. But in this I have been very concise, expecting to have an opportunity of treating the subjects more largely when I consider what he has further to produce. Mr. White† also cannot decline the discussion, and I have heard of the threats of others. We may, consequently, hope that this controversy (to which I find that much attention is given in foreign countries) will soon come to a proper termination, so that learned men in all nations will not long remain in uncertainty with respect to any thing of importance relating to it.

As this is a controversy that will probably have lasting consequences, let all who engage in it, on either side, be careful to acquit themselves in proportion to the character which they apprehend they have at stake; but above all, let *truth* be our great object. Our readers will easily perceive whether it be so or not. We shall sooner deceive ourselves than them. And least of all can we impose upon that great Being who is *the God of truth*, who secretly guides all our pursuits, and whose excellent purposes will be answered by them, with whatever views we may engage in them.

* Though an account of *The State of Calvinism among the Dissenters*, on which Dr. Horsley enlarges so much, has but little to do with the object of our controversy, I should have said something more on this subject, but that I hear it will be considered by a person who is exceedingly well qualified to inform the public concerning it, and to explain the cause of Dr. Horsley's very gross and palpable mistake. *(P.)* Dr. Priestley here refers to Mr. Palmer's publication. See *infra*, on *Letter* VI. No. IV., *Note*.

† Author, or rather *preacher*, of "*Sermons* preached at the *Bampton* Lecture, 1784, which Dr. Priestley noticed in 1785. On Sermon VIII., which examines the pretensions of Mahomet, there is a long note on that favourite topic, the agreement of "the Koran of Mahomet and the Creed of Socinus," in rejecting "the doctrines of the Divinity and Atonement of Christ." *Notes*, pp. lxi.—lxviii.

This Note was, probably, communicated by Mr. Badcock. In a letter to his able assistant, if not his *principal*, dated Oxford, July 27, 1784, Mr. White says, "My notes on the Mahometan History will be copious; but I want some Remarks on the Christian part, which I here send you. Send me every thing you can, by way of Annotation as soon as possible." See Dr. Gabriel's "Facts relating to the Rev. Dr. White's Bampton Lectures," 1789, pp. 33, 34.

LETTERS

TO

THE ARCHDEACON OF ST. ALBAN'S.

AN INTRODUCTORY LETTER.

Rev. Sir,

In the course of our controversy, you maintained that there was *a church of Trinitarian Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, after the time of Adrian;* and as the account that *Origen* gives of the state of things in his time does not admit of the existence of such a church, you scrupled not to say, that he had recourse to the wilful and deliberate "allegation of a notorious falsehood."* This you did on so little foundation, that I charged you with being *a falsifier of history, and a defamer of the character of the dead.*

On this article you have thought proper (notwithstanding your previously declared resolution to the contrary) to make your defence, in which you produce five passages from ancient writers, two from *Origen* himself, two from *Jerome*, and one from *Epiphanius.* In these *Letters* I undertake to shew that, though you have taken eighteen months to write, and to revise your *Remarks*, you have grossly misunderstood, or misapplied, all the passages, so that not one of them is to your purpose, and my charge still remains in its full force. For the justness of *my* interpretation of the passages in question, I appeal to all who have any pretensions to scholarship, in this or any other country, and in this public manner I call upon you to vindicate *your own.*

On this article, at least, an article deliberately selected by yourself, let the controversy between us come to a fair issue. Nothing has been or shall be wanting to it on my part; and therefore the public will certainly expect your explicit and speedy answer.

I am, Reverend Sir,
Your very humble servant,
J. PRIESTLEY.

Birmingham, June 1, 1786.

* *Tracts*, p. 156.

LETTER I.

Of the Veracity of Origen.

REV. SIR,

AFTER having *indulged your indolence*, as you say, eighteen months, I am happy to find that, notwithstanding your opinion of my *manifest insufficiency* as your antagonist, (which, you observe, left you "at liberty to indulge" *your* "indolence without seeming to desert" *your* "cause,")* there was something in my *Letters* to you that has at length roused you to make a reply. To me this is a very high gratification; for, my predominant disposition not being indolence, I rejoice in any circumstance that contributes to keep the subject of our controversy in view; being confident, that nothing but a continued attention to it is requisite to a speedy decision in favour of the cause that I have espoused, which I cannot help considering as of the greatest importance to the cause of Christianity itself.

I should have been more pleased if you had pursued the discussion of every article in debate between us; but, as you have thought proper to confine yourself chiefly to what relates to the orthodoxy of the primitive Jewish church, I must do the same, first considering what you have advanced in order to impeach the veracity of *Origen*, and then the testimonies of *Epiphanius* and *Jerome*, as evidences of the existence of a whole church of orthodox Jews at Jerusalem after the time of *Adrian*.

"In the second book against Celsus," (to use your own words,) "near the beginning of the book, Origen asserts of the Hebrew Christians of his own times, without exception, that they had not abandoned the laws and customs of their ancestors, and that for that reason they were called *Ebionites*."† This is also the appellation that he gives to all the Jewish Christians, of whom he makes two classes, one of them believing the miraculous conception of Jesus, and the other denying it; but neither of them admitting his divinity.

This testimony of such a person as *Origen* to the Unitarianism of all the Jewish Christians *in his time*, goes so near to prove the Unitarianism of the great body of Jewish

* *Remarks*, p. 1. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 333.
† *Remarks*, p. 22. *(P.) Tracts*, p. 348.

Christians, and consequently of the Christian church in general, *in the time of the apostles*, that I do not wonder at your wishing to set it aside; and it is so full and express, that you have no other way of doing it than by maintaining that this most respectable man knowingly asserted an untruth. You even add that you would not take his evidence upon oath.* Indeed, this writer was so circumstanced, in consequence of living so near *Judæa*, and sometimes in it, that he could not but have known whether there was any considerable body of Jewish Christians who believed the doctrine of the Trinity, and who had abandoned the customs of their ancestors, or not; so that, if what he asserted be an untruth, it *must* have been a *wilful* one, and (as serving the purpose of his argument) a *deliberate* one.

There are, however, some circumstances attending this charge of a wilful falsehood against *Origen*, that I should have thought might have made you pause before you had advanced it so confidently as you have done.

The general character of *Origen* makes the supposition highly improbable; for he was a man not more distinguished by his genius and learning, (in which he had confessedly no superior in the age in which he lived,) than he was by his integrity and his firmness in the cause of Christian truth; and when, in a subsequent age, his opinions were deemed to be heretical, his greatest enemies left his moral character unimpeached. In such esteem was he universally held, that, as *Eusebius* informs us, it was generally said of him, "As was his speech, such was his conduct; and as was his conduct, such was his speech:"† his eloquence and the virtues of his life corresponding to each other. And yet this is the man whose evidence, because it makes against yourself, you declare that you would not admit upon oath.

Had the testimony of *Origen* to the Unitarianism of the great body of Jewish Christians not been well founded, it was greatly to the purpose of many of the early writers (and particularly of *Eusebius*, who maintained the novelty of the Unitarian doctrine) to have refuted it. But neither Eusebius nor any other ancient writer, the most zealous for orthodoxy, and the most hostile to Origen on other accounts, has attempted it. Might it not have been expected

* *Remarks*, pp. 28, 30. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 353, 355.

† Οἷον γὲν τὸν λογὲν τοιουδε φασι τὸν τροπον· και οἷον τὸν τροπον τοιουδε και τὸν λογον επιδεικνυτο. *Euseb. Hist.* L. vi. C. iii. p. 261. (*P.*)

of Eusebius in particular, that after he had copied Origen's account of the *Ebionites*, by dividing them into two classes, just as he had done, (viz. some of them believing the miraculous conception, and others not,) he would have added that, notwithstanding what Origen had said to the contrary, many of them had abandoned the law of Moses, and were believers in the divinity of Christ? But he has not done any such thing. He therefore must have known that he could not do it, and he was not disposed to tell a wilful lie in the case. Indeed, I am willing to think that few persons are so abandoned as to be capable of doing this.

With respect to this particular assertion concerning the state of the Jewish Christians in the time of *Origen*, it is so circumstanced, that, if he had even been *capable* of asserting a falsehood, *this* was the last that he would have had recourse to; because he was writing in a public controversy, in which he has insisted largely on this particular article, and insulted his adversary for his ignorance of a notorious fact. In this situation, he must have been nothing less than infatuated to have advanced what all his readers must have known to be false. A falsehood so circumstanced, and which must have been a wilful one, would have been so evidently ruinous to his credit, and so fatal to his cause, that he must have been a fool not to have seen it.

Besides, this particular circumstance, of the Christian Jews not abandoning the customs of their ancestors, was not of so much consequence to his general argument in defence of Christianity, but that he might very well have neglected it. Nothing, therefore, but a perfect confidence that what he did advance was true, could have led him to make any declaration on the subject.

What is more extraordinary still, you say, he himself contradicted "his own assertion—at no greater distance than in the third section of the same book," where "the good father," as you ironically call him, "takes quite another ground to confute his adversary."* Certainly this must be thought to be, *à priori*, in the highest degree improbable.

I shall now consider this flagrant contradiction, by which this great man (for so all the world has ever called him) is supposed to confute himself, and so far to have lost all

* *Remarks*, p. 25. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 350.

character, that the Archdeacon of St. Alban's would not take his evidence upon oath; and I shall recite it in your own words.

"At no greater distance than in the third section of the same book, the good father takes quite another ground to confute his adversary. He insults over his adversary's ignorance, for not making the distinctions which he himself, in the allegation in question, had confounded. 'It is my present point,' says Origen, 'to evince Celsus's ignorance; who has made a Jew say to his countrymen, to Israelites believing in Christ, *Upon what motive have you deserted the law of your ancestors?* But how have they deserted the law of their ancestors, who reprove those who are inattentive to it, and say, *Tell me, ye,* &c.?' Then, after a citation of certain texts from St. Paul's epistles, in which the apostle avails himself of the authority of the law to inforce particular duties, which texts make nothing either for or against the Jew's assertion, that the Christians of the circumcision had abandoned their ancient laws; but prove only, that the disuse of the law, if it was actually gone into disuse, could not be deemed a desertion; because it proceeded not from any disregard to the authority of the lawgiver: after a citation of texts to this purpose, Origen proceeds in this remarkable strain: 'And how confusedly does Celsus's Jew speak upon this subject, when he might have said more plausibly, SOME of you *have relinquished the old customs* upon pretence of expositions and allegories. SOME again expounding, as you call it, spiritually, nevertheless observe the institutions of our ancestors. But SOME, not admitting these expositions, are willing to receive Jesus as the person foretold by the prophets, and to observe the law of Moses according to the ancient customs, as having in the letter the whole meaning of the spirit.'* In these words Origen confesses all that I have alleged of him. He confesses, in contradiction to his former assertion, that he knew of three sorts of Jews professing Christianity; one sort adhered to the letter of the Mosaic law, rejecting all figurative interpretations; another sort admitted a figurative interpretation, con-

* —Και ὡς συγκεχυμενως γε ταυθ' ὁ παρα τῳ Κελσῳ Ιουδαιος λεγει, δυναμενος πιθανωτερον ειπειν, ὁτι ΤΙΝΕΣ μεν ἡμων καταλελοιπασι τα εθη προφασει διηγησεων και αλληγοριων· ΤΙΝΕΣ δε και διηγημενοι, ὡς επαγγελλεσθε, πνευματικως, ουδεν ἡττον τα πατρια τηρειτε· ΤΙΝΕΣ δε ουδε διηγημενοι, βουλεσθε τον Ιησουν παραδεξασθαι ὡς προφητευθεντα, και τον Μωυσεως νομον τηρησαι, κατα τα πατρια· ὡς εν τῃ λεξει εχοντες τον παντα τῃ πνευματος νουν. [*Horsley.*] *Origenis contra Celsum*, L. ii. p. 59. *Cantabrigiæ*, 1658, 4to. (*P.*)

forming, however, to the letter of the precept: but a third sort (the first in Origen's enumeration) had relinquished the observance of the literal precept, conceiving it to be of no importance in comparison of the latent, figurative meaning."*

This contains the whole of your curious reasoning, in which you suppose that *Origen*, in treating of the same subject, and in continuation of the same argument, has given you this pretence for impeaching his veracity, as you have done. But surely this writer, who must have known his own meaning, could not have imagined that he had really contradicted himself in two passages, not in different works written at different times, or in distant parts of the same work, (in which he might have forgotten what he had said in one of the passages, when he was writing the other,) but in the same work, the same part of the work, and in paragraphs so very near to each other. And I believe nobody before yourself ever imagined that there was any contradiction in them at all.

In the former he asserts, in general terms, without making any particular exception, that the Jewish Christians adhered to the customs of their ancestors; and in the latter, which almost immediately follows it, he says, that his adversary, who had asserted the contrary, would have said what was more *plausible*, (not what was *true*,) if he had said that some of them had relinquished their ancient customs, while the rest adhered to them; alluding, perhaps, to a few who had abandoned those customs, while the great body of them had not; which is sufficiently consistent with what he had said before. For inconsiderable exceptions are not regarded in general assertions. It would have been very extraordinary indeed, if *no* Jewish Christians whatever had abandoned the rites of their former religion, when in all ages some Jews, whether they became Christians or not, have done so. In like manner, it concerns me not, to assert that no individuals of the Jewish Christians embraced the doctrine of the Trinity, because my purpose is sufficiently answered if *the great body of them*, to whom the rest bore no sensible proportion, were *Unitarians*. And though there might be a few Jewish Christians who had deserted their former customs, which would have given *Celsus* a *plausible pretence* for making such a division of them as to make these one of

* *Tracts*, pp. 350—352.

the classes, yet the great body of them had not; and this was sufficient to remove the reproach which Celsus had thrown out against the Jewish Christians in general.

That this was really the case, and that the great body of Jewish Christians were likewise Unitarians, we have the express testimony of *Origen*, uncontradicted, as I have shewn, by himself, or any other authority whatever. He could not but be well informed with respect to the fact; his veracity was never impeached; and if he had been disposed to deny the truth, (which he had no temptation to do,) he wrote in circumstances in which his attempts to falsify could not have availed him.

But to prove *Origen* to be guilty of contradicting himself, is not the only use you make of the passage. You say, "But this is not all. In the next sentence he gives us to understand, though I confess more indirectly, but he gives us to understand, that of these three sorts of Hebrews professing Christianity, they only, who had laid aside the use of the Mosaic law, were in his time considered as true Christians."* This is extraordinary indeed; but let us see *how* it is *given to be understood*. Having found so little in your clear *conclusions*, I do not expect much from your supposed *insinuations*.

"For he mentions it as a further proof of the ignorance of Celsus, pretending, as it appears he did, to deep erudition upon all subjects, that, in his account of the heresies of the Christian church, he had omitted *the Israelites believing in Jesus, and not laying aside the law of their ancestors*. 'But how should Celsus,' he says, 'make clear distinctions upon this point, who, in the sequel of his work, mentions impious heresies altogether alienated from Christ, and others which have renounced the Creator, and has not noticed' (or knew not of) 'Israelites believing in Jesus, and not relinquishing the law of their fathers?'† What opinion," you say, "is to be entertained of a writer's veracity, who in one page asserts that the Hebrews professing Christianity had not renounced the Jewish law; and in the next affirms, that a part of them had renounced it, not without an insinuation that they who

* *Remarks*, p. 27. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 352.

† Αλλα γαρ πωθεν Κελσος τα κατα τον τοπον τρανωσαι, ὁς και αἱρεσεων μεν αθεων, και τθ Ιησθ παντῃ αλλοτριων εν τοις ἑξης εμνημονευσε, και αλλων καταλειπθσων τον δημιθργον ουκ οἱδε δε και Ισραηλιτας εις Ιησθν πιστευοντας, και ου καταλειποντας τον πατριον νομον; [Here ends *Horsley's* quotation in *Tracts*, p. 353, *Note*.] Ου γαρ προεκειτο αυτῳ φιλαληθως ὁλα τα κατα τον τοπον εξετασαι, ἱν' ει τι χρησιμον εὑρισκοι παραδεξηται, αλλα και ὡς εχθρος, και ὁλος τθ ανατρεπειν ἁμα τῳ ακθσαι γενομενος, τα τοιαυτα ανεγραψεν. *Orig. contra Cels.* L. ii. p. 59. *(P.)*

had not were heretics, not true Christians? EGO HUIC TESTI, ETIAMSI JURATO, QUI TAM, MANIFESTO FUMOS VENDIT, ME NON CREDITURUM ESSE CONFIRMO."*

Such is the curious inference of the learned Archdeacon of St. Alban's. From this construction of the passage a person might be led to think that *Origen* represented *Celsus* as having undertaken to give an account of the heresies in the Christian church, and as having in that account omitted *the Israelites believing in Jesus, and not laying aside the rites of their ancestors;* and on no other ground can your insinuation stand. Whereas, the most natural construction of the passage is, that *Origen* says, "It is no wonder that Celsus should be so ignorant of what he was treating, when he classed the Gnostics along with Christians, and did not even know that there were Israelites who professed Christianity, and adhered to the laws of Moses." Where, then, is the most distant insinuation that the *Israelites believing in Christ, and not laying aside the rites of their ancestors*, were heretics? That the Gnostics were classed with Christians, was a common complaint of the orthodox in that age.

You strangely allege another instance of what you call *prevarication* in *Origen*, in the same book against *Celsus*. In the controversy with the Jews about the meaning of the word עלמה, which he contends, signifies *a virgin*, he says, "The word עלמה, which the LXX. have translated into the word παρθενος (a virgin), but other interpreters into the word νεανις (a young woman), is put too, AS THEY SAY, in Deuteronomy, for a virgin."†

On this you remark as follows: "What is this *as they say?* Was it unknown to the compiler of the Hexapla, what the reading of the Hebrew text, in his own time, was? If he knew that it was what he would have it thought to be; why does he seem to assert upon hearsay only? If he knew not, why did he not inform himself, that he might either assert with confidence what he had found upon enquiry to be true, or not assert what could not be maintained? EGO HUIC TESTI, ETIAMSI JURATO, QUI TAM, MANIFESTO FUMOS VENDIT, ME NON CREDITURUM ESSE CONFIRMO."‡

I am astonished that any man could think this state of the

* *Tracts*, pp. 352, 353.

† Εαν δε Ιεδαιος εὑρεσιλογων, το Ιδε ἡ παρθενος μη γεγραφθαι λεγει αλλ' αντ' αυτε Ιδε ἡ νεανις· φησομεν προς αυτον, ὁτι ἡ μεν λεξις ἡ Λαλμα ἡν οἱ μεν ἑβδομηκοντα μετειληφασι προς την παρθενον, αλλοι δε εις την νεανιν, κειται ὡς φασι και εν τῳ Δευτερονομιῳ επι παρθενε ὑτως εχεσα. *Orig. contra Cels.* L. i. p. 27. (*P.*)

‡ *Tracts*, pp. 354, 355.

case probable. The question between Origen and the Jews was not what was the word in the Hebrew, but what was the meaning of it in a particular place. But even admitting that the dispute was about the true reading in the original, what great matter was there in *Origen's* saying *the Jews said so*, when he knew that what they said was true? Is this a foundation on which to affirm that you would not take a man's evidence upon his oath? What an appetite must a man have for calumny, who can seize upon such a circumstance as this to gratify it!

Fœnum habet in cornu: hunc tu, Romane, caveto.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

General Observations relating to the supposed Orthodox Church of Jewish Christians at Jerusalem after the Time of Adrian.

Rev. Sir,

Having fully considered what you have alleged in support of your extraordinary charge of *wilful falsehood* in *Origen*, because the supposition of his being an honest man was inconsistent with the existence of your church of orthodox Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, after the time of *Adrian*, I shall proceed to consider the *positive evidence* that you have produced for the actual existence of such a church. But I shall, in the first place, mention some observations of a general nature relating to the subject.

That there was a Christian church at Jerusalem after the time of *Adrian*, we all acknowledge; but you say, "the point in dispute between us is, of what members the church of Ælia was composed. He says, of converts of Gentile extraction. I say, of Hebrews: of the very same persons, in the greater part, who were members of the ancient Hebrew church, at the time when the Jews were subdued by Adrian."*

1. Now, that the members of this church were not *Jews*, but *Greeks*, I think indisputable from this plain consideration, that after the time of *Adrian* the bishops of that church were Greeks, and that the language in which the public offices were performed was Greek; whereas, immediately before, the bishops had been *Hebrews*, and the public offices had been in the Hebrew tongue.

* *Remarks*, p. 41. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 364.

2. If there was any considerable body of orthodox Jewish Christians, it is extraordinary that no particular mention should be made of them by any ancient writer. Jerome speaks of his acquaintance with learned Ebionites by whom he was taught the Hebrew tongue. Living as he did in the country, he might as easily, on your idea, have found learned orthodox Jewish Christians, with whom it would have been more agreeable to him to associate, unless you suppose that the learned *Ebionites* were heretics, and the unlearned, orthodox.

3. As so many writers speak of *Ebionites*, or heterodox *Nazarenes*, it would surely have been natural for some of them to have added, that they were not the great body, or at least, not the whole, of the Jewish Christians. The mention of the one would naturally have drawn after it, on some occasion, the mention of the other; and yet no ancient writer speaks of them.

4. As to *a whole church* of orthodox Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, or elsewhere, we hear of no intercourse between any such church and other orthodox churches. None of their bishops, or deputies from them, appear at any council; no appeals are ever made to them; which would have been natural, as to the mother of all the churches. This is easily accounted for, on the supposition that all the remains of the Jewish Christians were the poor and despised Unitarian *Ebionites*, residing chiefly beyond the sea of Galilee, whose numbers likewise were inconsiderable; but hard to be supposed, if there were any churches of orthodox Jewish Christians residing at Jerusalem, or elsewhere.

5. If there was any considerable body of orthodox Jewish Christians, why do we never hear of any *Hebrew* gospels besides that of *Matthew?* If they held the doctrine of the orthodox Gentile churches concerning the person of Christ, it is probable that they would have had the same respect for the other gospels, and the other books of the *New Testament;* and yet it is almost certain that they made little use of them.

By way of apology for your additions to the scanty accounts of the ancients, concerning the conquest of Jerusalem by *Adrian*, you say, "The ecclesiastical history of those times is so very general and imperfect, that whoever attempts to make out a consistent story from the ancient writers which are come down to us, will find himself under a necessity of helping out their broken accounts by his own conjectures."*

* *Remarks*, p. 38. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 362.

But certainly, Sir, the *contradicting* of an ancient writer is not the way to *help out* his account of things. Now *Eusebius*, the oldest writer who mentions the fact, says, that after the taking of the city by *Adrian*, the whole nation of the Jews (*παν εθνος*, which excludes all distinction with respect to *religion)* were forbidden even to see the desolation of their metropolis at a distance.* To *help out this broken account*, because it does not contain all that you wish it to do, (though I see nothing *broken* in it,) you say, that the Jews were allowed to remain in the place, and enjoy the privileges of the *Ælian* colony, on condition of their becoming Christians. To help out this addition, I would further add, that another of the terms of the capitulation was, that they should from that time speak *Greek*, as without this, they could have derived no benefit from the offices of a Greek church.

Sulpitius says, that by this severity to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Adrian thought to destroy the Christian faith. But to this you oppose the authority of *Orosius*, (calling it, however, but *a feather in the scale,*†) that when the Jews were excluded, the Christians were allowed to remain. If your liberty of *helping out a broken story* may be exercised here, I should say, that, in the idea even of this writer, the *Greek* Christians might remain, but the *Jewish* not. If any regard is to be paid to *Eusebius*, the oldest historian, or to *Sulpitius*, who is much more circumstantial than *Orosius*, and on that account better entitled to credit, no Jews, Christians, or others, were allowed to remain in the place.

To make your account the more probable, you say, "It is a notorious fact that Adrian was not unfavourable to the Christians;" and that "the church in his reign obtained a respite from persecution." But how far did this favour to the church extend? You say, "the fury of its persecutors was restrained by the imperial rescripts to the provincial governors, who were directed not to proceed against the Christians, except by way of regular trial, upon the allegation of some certain crime; and, when nothing more was alleged than the bare name of Christianity, to punish the

* Και τε της απονοιας αυτοις αιτιε την αξιαν εκτισαντος δικην, το παν εθνος εξ εκεινη και της περι τα Ιεροσολυμα γης παμπαν επιβαινειν ειργεται, νομε δογματι και διαταξεσιν Αδριανε ως αν μηδ' εξ αποπτε θεωροιεν το πατρφον εδαφος εγκελευσαμενε. *Euseb. Eccl. Hist.* L. iv. C. vi. edit. R. Steph. Paris, 1544, fol. 34. *(P.)*

† *Remarks*, p. 43. *(P.)* "The testimony of Orosius, however inconsiderable, might of itself outweigh the opinion of Dr. Priestley; if a feather only in the one scale be more than a counterpoise for a nothing in the other." *Tracts*, p. 367.

informer as a sycophant."* That is, as the history of those times enables us to interpret it, they were not to be punished as Christians till they were proved to be so, which was the case in the reign of *Trajan;* but does not amount to a toleration of the Jews at Jerusalem, on condition of their embracing Christianity.

Your favourite *Mosheim* says, that what was done by *Adrian* (in whose reign the persecution of Christians had raged with peculiar violence) "appears to have been a solemn renewal of the law of Trajan."† In the reign of *Antoninus Pius*, but not before, it was ordered, that a man being proved to be a Christian, should not be deemed sufficient for his condemnation, unless he was also proved to have been guilty of some crime against the state. There is, therefore, little reason to think that Adrian was so well disposed towards Christianity as to permit the rebellious Jews to remain in Jerusalem on condition of their embracing it.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

Of the Testimony of Epiphanius to the Existence of a Church of Orthodox Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, after the Time of Adrian.

REV. SIR,

AFTER the preliminary observations contained in the preceding Letter, I shall now consider the testimony that you have produced from *Epiphanius.*

You say, that "this fact, (viz. of the return of the Jews from Pella to Jerusalem, after the wars of Adrian,) "of which Dr. Priestley does me the honour to make me the inventor, is asserted by Epiphanius.—The confidence," you add, "with which he mentions this as a fact forged by me, is only one instance out of a great number of his own shameless intrepidity in assertion."‡

If, Sir, you wish to reclaim a person, you should never deprive him of *all* character, but should leave him a *little*, a small root, from which *more* may afterwards spring. Having now no character to lose, being capable of asserting any thing, true or false, that is likely to answer my purpose, I

* *Remarks*, p. 44. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 367, 368.
† *Eccl. Hist.* (*Cent.* ii. Pt. i. Ch. ii. Sect. iii.), I. p. 128. (*P.*)
‡ *Remarks*, p. 46. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 370, 373.

will, " with the most shameless intrepidity," assert that *Epiphanius* mentions no such *fact* as you so very confidently suppose him to have done. After carefully examining the passage which you have produced, I do maintain that in it he makes no mention whatever of any return of Christian Jews from *Pella*, besides that which took place after the destruction of Jerusalem by *Titus*, and not at all of any return after the destruction by *Adrian*. This is most evident from attending to the very next sentence which follows the words that you have quoted. The whole passage is as follows:

After mentioning *Aquila*, as appointed by *Adrian*, the inspector of his works at *Ælia*, Epiphanius gives the following history of him:—"Aquila, living at Jerusalem, and seeing the disciples of the disciples of the apostles flourishing in the faith, and working great miracles, especially of healing; (for they had returned from the city of Pella to Jerusalem, and taught there; for when the city was about to be taken by the Romans, all the disciples had been forewarned by an angel to leave the city, which was devoted to destruction. These, leaving it, went and dwelt in the above-mentioned Pella, beyond Jordan, one of those that was called Decapolis; but, returning after the desolation of Jerusalem, as I have said, worked miracles;) Aquila, therefore, being convinced, became a Christian, and, after some time, requesting the seal of Christianity, (viz. baptism,) obtained it."*

What can be more evident, than that the return of the Jewish Christians from *Pella*, mentioned in this passage by *Epiphanius*, is that return which followed the destruction of Jerusalem by *Titus?* For he speaks of their having left that city antecedent to *this return* to it, in consequence of being warned by an angel so to do; which was said to be the case before the destruction by Titus, but never before that by *Adrian;* and it was by the disciples of those who then returned, that *Aquila* was converted to Christianity; which was probably a considerable time before the destruction of the Jews by Adrian.

* Ὁ τοινυν Ακυλας, διαγων εν τῃ Ἱερȣσαλημ, και ὁρων τȣς μαθητας των μαθητων των αποςολων ανθȣντας τῃ πιςει, και σημεια μεγαλα εργαζομενȣς, ιασεων και αλλων θαυματων· ησαν γαρ ὑποςρεψαντες απο Πελλης της δεκαπολεως εις Ἱερȣσαλημ, και διδασκοντες, ἡνικα γαρ εμελλεν ἡ πολις ἁλισκεσθαι ὑπο των Ῥωμαιων, προεχρηματισθησαν ὑπο αγγελȣ, παντες οἱ μαθηται μεταςηναι απο της πολεως μελλȣσης, αρδην απολλυσθαι· οἱ τινες και μεταναςαι γενομενοι, ῳκησαν εν Πελλῃ τῃ προγεγραμμενῃ πολει, περαν τȣ Ιορδανȣ, ἡτις εκ Δεκαπολεως λεγεται ειναι· μετα δε την ερημωσιν Ἱερȣσαλημ αποςρεψαντες, ὡς εφην, σημεια μεγαλα επετελȣν. Ὁ ουν Ακυλας κατανυγεις την διανοιαν, τῳ χριςιανισμῳ επιςευσεν· αιτησας δε μετα χρονον την εν Χριςῳ σφραγιδα, εκομισατο. *De Mensuris et Ponderibus, Epiphanii Opera*, II. p. 171. *Paris*, 1622. (*P.*)

After the imperfect quotation of the passage,* of which I have given the entire translation, you have the assurance to add, "Whether this return of the Christians of Jerusalem from Pella took place in the interval between the end of Titus's war and the commencement of Adrian's, or after the end of Adrian's, is a matter of no importance. It is sufficient for my purpose that these returned Christians were residing at Jerusalem, or more properly at Ælia, at the same time that Aquila was residing there as overseer of the emperor's works. Let not the public be abused by any cavils which ignorance or fraud may raise about the chronology of the return."†

But certainly it must be of consequence to know whether *Aquila* was residing at Jerusalem after the destruction of that city by *Adrian;* and this is more than *Epiphanius* says, or is at all probable in itself; for the rebuilding of Jerusalem by Adrian, in which Aquila was employed by him, was undertaken in the 13th year of his reign, a year before the revolt of the Jews;‡ and it was not till the 18th of Adrian that they were entirely subdued.

According to *Epiphanius*, Aquila, after his conversion to Christianity by the descendants of the Jewish Christians who were returned from *Pella*, (retaining his former practices,) was excommunicated by them. After this he became a Jew, and, applying himself to the study of the Scriptures, made a translation of them into *Greek*. This translation, *Cave* supposes to have been made A. D. 128 or 129, the 11th or 12th of Adrian. His conversion to Christianity, therefore, was probably prior to the reign of Adrian; and yet that is the only circumstance that proves any intercourse he ever had with Jewish Christians returned from Pella. On which side, then, is *the ignorance*, I say nothing of *the fraud*, of which you suspect me in this business? You must, Sir, dig deeper than you have yet done, for the foundation of this favourite church.

I am, &c.

* Dr. Horsley's quotation ends with Ακυλας, (*line* 8, *Note* *, p. 289,) in *Tracts*, p. 370.

† *Remarks*, p. 47. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 370, 371.

‡ "During *Adrian's* stay at Athens, (A. D. 134,) the Jews revolted, provoked chiefly, says *Dio Cassius*, (L. lxix. p. 793,) at *Adrian's* sending a *Roman* colony to *Jerusalem;* at his calling that city, after the name of his family, *Ælia Capitolina;* and his erecting a temple to *Jupiter Capitolinus* in the place where the ancient temple stood. *Spartian* tells us, that *Adrian* published an edict, forbidding them to be circumcised, which prompted them to take up arms, and attempt the recovery of their ancient liberty. Be that as it will, *Adrian* had no sooner left *Syria* than they openly revolted." *A. U. Hist.* 1748, XV. p. 170.

LETTER IV.

Of the Evidence from Jerome in favour of the Existence of a Church of Orthodox Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, after the Time of Adrian.

REV. SIR,

I COME now to the two passages which you have quoted from *Jerome*. That on which you lay the greatest stress you introduce in the following manner: "But I give him Origen. I will rest the credit of my seventh position upon the mention which occurs in St. Jerome's Commentary upon Isaiah, of Hebrews believing in Christ, as distinct from the Nazarenes. St. Jerome relates two different expositions of the prophecy concerning Zabulon and Naphtali, delivered in the beginning of the 9th chapter of Isaiah, of which expositions he ascribes the one to the *Hebrews believing in Christ*, the other to the *Nazarenes*. The character given of these Hebrews, that 'they believed in Christ,' without any thing to distinguish their belief from the common belief of the church, without any note of its error or imperfection, is a plain character of compleat orthodoxy."*

It is somewhat remarkable, that having before maintained that those whom *Jerome* called *Nazarenes*, in his epistle to Austin, were *orthodox Christians*, you should now allow that, by the same term, he here means *heretics;* and that the phrase, *believing in Christ*, should now be a character of *complete orthodoxy*, when in that epistle it is predicated of the heretical *Ebionites*. What clue can we have to any man's meaning, if he be supposed to use terms in such different and even opposite senses? When neither himself nor any other writer ever says that there *were* two such very different kinds of *Nazarenes*, what right can you have to assert that there were?

The passage in Jerome on which, though you lay so much stress, you do not quote, is as follows: in his interpretation of *Isaiah* ix. 1, (cited in *Matt.* iv. 16,) he says, "Galilee of the Gentiles, Aquila translates Θινας of the Gentiles, and Symmachus *the boundaries* of the Gentiles. By Θινας we understand heaps of sand on sea-coasts or shores. The Hebrews, believing in Christ, interpret the passage in this

* *Remarks*, p. 48. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 374.

manner. At first, these two tribes, Zabulon and Naphtali, were taken by the Assyrians, and carried into their enemy's country, and Galilee was destroyed; which the prophet now says was relieved, because he bore the sins of the people. But afterwards, not only the two tribes, but the rest that dwelled beyond Jordan, in Samaria, were carried captive. And this they say the scripture now declares, that the country whose people were first carried captive, and began to serve the Babylonians, and which was first involved in the darkness of error, was the first to see the light of Christ preaching to them, and from it the gospel was preached to all other nations. The Nazarenes, *whose opinion I have given above*, thus endeavour to explain the passage: Christ coming, and his preaching shining forth, in the first place the country of Zabulon and Naphtali, being delivered from the error of the Scribes and Pharisees, shook from their necks the heavy yoke of Jewish traditions; but afterwards, by the preaching of the apostle Paul, who was the last of the apostles, the preaching was increased or multiplied, and the gospel of Christ shone to the utmost boundaries of the Gentiles and of the ocean. Then all the world, which before walked or sat in darkness, and was held in the chains of idolatry and death, saw the clear light of the gospel."*

Before you can shew that this passage, on which you lay so much stress, is at all to your purpose, you must prove the three following things: first, that *the Hebrews believing in Christ* were different from the *Nazarenes*; secondly, that the former were completely orthodox; and, thirdly, that those orthodox *Jewish* Christians resided at *Jerusalem*. And it appears to me, that not one of these suppostions is at all probable.

* "Pro Galilæa Gentium, Aquila Ἔθνας gentium, Symmachus, terminos gentium interpretati sunt: Ἔθνας autem tumulos intelligimus arenarum, qui vel in littoribus vel in ripis sunt. Hebræi credentes in Christum hunc locum ita edisserunt. Primo tempore hæ duæ tribus Zabulon et Nephtalim ab Assyriis captæ sunt et ductæ in hostilem terram, et Galilæa deserta est, quam nunc propheta dicit alleviatam esse, eo quod peccata populi sustineret. Postea autem non solum duæ tribus, sed et reliquæ quæ habitabant trans Jordanem in Samaria, ductæ sunt in captivitatem. Et hoc, inquiunt, scriptura nunc dicit, quod regio cujus populus primus ductus est in captivitatem et Babiloniis servire cœpit, et quæ prius in tenebris versabatur erroris, ipse primum lucem prædicantis viderit Christi, et ex ea in universas gentes sit evangelium seminatum. Nazaræi, quorum opinionem supra posui, hunc locum ita explanare conantur. Adveniente Christo, et prædicatione illius coruscante, prima terra Zabulon et terra Nephtalim Scribarum et Pharisæorum est erroribus liberata, et gravissimum traditionum Judaicarum jugum excussit de cervicibus suis. Postea autem per evangelium apostoli Pauli, qui novissimus apostolorum omnium fuit, ingravata, est, i. e. multiplicata prædicatio, et in terminos gentium et viam universi maris Christi evangelium splenduit. Denique omnis orbis, qui ante ambulabat vel sedebat in tenebris, et idololatriæ ac mortis vinculis tenebatur, clarum evangelicum lumen aspexit." *Opera*, IV. p. 38. (*P.*)

That by *Nazarenes*, Jerome did not intend any other than the *Hebrews believing in Christ*,* but only meant to vary his mode of expression, is probable from this consideration: that, after giving a translation of the passage by *Aquila* and *Symmachus*, both *Ebionites*, he speaks of the interpretation of the prophecy by the Hebrew Christians in general, and then says, the Nazarenes, *whose opinion he had given above*, explained or illustrated it in the manner that has been represented. The opinion to which he referred, as *given above*, was, therefore, probably, that of *the Hebrews believing in Christ*. And the explanations of the passage are not at all *different* from one another, but the latter a further illustration of the former; the one being an interpretation of the prophecy, and the latter a more particular application of it to the time of Christ and the gospel.

This passage, therefore, which you have quoted as decisively in your favour, instead of proving that the *Hebrews believing in Christ* were different from the *Nazarenes*, furnishes an additional argument that, in the idea of *Jerome*, they were the very same people; if it does not also prove that their opinions were the same with those of *Aquila* and *Symmachus*, or of the *Ebionites*.

You may, indeed, say, that the opinion of the *Nazarenes*, to which *Jerome* refers, as *given above*, was that account of the Nazarenes which is found in his commentary on the preceding chapter, viz. "their so receiving Christ as not to abandon the old law." But the remoteness of the passage, and its having no relation to the subject of which he is treating in his commentary on the ninth chapter, make it improbable.

2. Admitting that *Jerome* alluded to some difference between the *Hebrews believing in Christ*, and *the Nazarenes*, it is far from following that the former were *completely orthodox*, and the latter not; for the phrase, *believing in Christ*, is applied both by *Origen* and *Jerome* to the heretical Jewish Christians. His not expressly saying that they were *heretics* in this place, on which you lay so much stress, can never prove that they were *completely orthodox;* since their heresy had nothing to do with the subject of which Jerome is here treating.

* In a *Note* upon his Second Letter to Dr. Horne, (see *infra*,) Dr. Priestley shews this to have been Dr. Lardner's sense of *Jerome*, concerning "the Nazareans, called also believers from among the Hebrews." Dr. L. adds, speaking of "Jerome's commentary," just quoted, "So, he says, that text was explained by the Nazarenes, whom just before he called *the Hebrews that believed in Christ*." See *Lardner*, VII. pp. 21, 22.

All the difference between these two descriptions of Jewish Christians that Jerome *can* be supposed to allude to, is such a one as *Origen* made, of two sorts of *Ebionites*, viz. one who believed the miraculous conception, and the other who disbelieved it; or that of *Justin*, viz. of those who would hold communion with the Gentile Christians, and those who would not.

"It must strike the learned reader," you say, "that the Nazarenes mentioned by St. Jerome in the passage to which I now refer, of his annotations on Isaiah, must have been a different people from those mentioned by him with such contempt in his epistle to St. Austin, and described by Epiphanius. The Nazarenes here mentioned by St. Jerome held the Scribes and Pharisees in detestation, their traditions in contempt, and the apostle St. Paul in high veneration."* Now I see no intimation in this passage of there being any other kinds of *Nazarenes*, or *Jewish* Christians, besides such as *Paul* found at Jerusalem in his last journey thither, the more intelligent of them being his friends, and rejoicing in the success of his preaching. But even his greatest enemies must have admitted that the knowledge of Christianity was extended by his means; which is all that *Jerome* says of the *Nazarenes* in this place. As to the traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees, we read of no Jewish Christians who did not hold them in contempt.

3. Allowing both that the *Hebrews believing in Christ*, and the *Nazarenes*, were different people, and that the former were completely orthodox, it will not follow that there was a church of them at Jerusalem; which is the thing that you contend for.

"Upon these foundations," however, you say, "which a stronger arm than Dr. Priestley's shall not be able to tear up, stands 'the church of orthodox Jewish Christians at Jerusalem,'† to which the assertors of the Catholic faith will not scruple to appeal, in proof of the antiquity of their doctrine, whatever offence the very mention of the orthodox church at Jerusalem may give to the enraged Heresiarch."‡

Alas! these *new foundations*, being like the former built upon the sand, are also completely swept away. I will add, that he must be a bolder man than he that rebuilt *Jericho*, who shall attempt to restore them.

But this is not the only passage in *Jerome* to which you

* *Remarks*, p. 53. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 378. † See *supra*, pp. 175, 176, 264, 265.
‡ *Remarks*, p. 51. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 376.

appeal. You also say, that "he mentions Nazarenes who—held the doctrine of our Lord's divinity. For, by an exposition of Isaiah viii. 13, 14, which St. Jerome ascribes to them, it appears that they acknowledged in Christ the יהוה צבאות (the Lord God of Hosts) of the Old Testament."* For any thing like a shadow of a proof of this most extraordinary assertion, I a long time looked in vain, and thought the reference must have been misprinted; but at length, considering what kind of a reasoner I had to do with, I believe I discovered your real ideas on the subject.

The prophet says, (*Ch.* viii. 13, 14,) "Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread; and he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

In his commentary on this passage, *Jerome* says, "The Nazarenes (who so received Christ as not to abandon the observance of the old law) interpret these two houses, of Sammai and Hillel, from which arose the Scribes and Pharisees, &c.—and that these were the *two houses* which did not receive the Saviour, who was to them for a destruction and an offence."†

Jerome, however, does not make the inference that you do, viz. that because the *Nazarenes* thought that this prophecy referred to the times of Christ, and to his rejection by the Scribes and Pharisees, they believed Christ to be the *Lord of Hosts*. They only call him *the Saviour*, meaning, probably, a person speaking and acting by authority from God, who was in reality rejected by those who rejected his messenger, though a *mere man*. As our Lord himself says, *Luke* x. 16, "He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." On this ground you might rank both the *Nazarenes* and all the modern professed Unitarians with believers in the divinity of Christ. You might even make them believers

* *Remarks*, p. 58. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 382.

† "Duas domus Nazarei (qui ita Christum recipiunt ut observationes legis veteris non amittant) duas familias interpretantur Samai et Hillel, ex quibus orti sunt Scribæ et Pharisæi, quorum suscepit scholam Axibas, quem magistrum Aquilæ proseliti autumant, et post eum Meir: cui successit Johannen, filius Zacharæi, et post eum Eliezer, et per ordinem Delphon, et rursum Josephus Galilæus, et usque ad captivitatem Hierusalem Josue. Samai igitur et Hillel, non multo prius quam dominus nasceretur orti sunt in Judæa, quorum prior *dissipator* interpretatur, sequens *prophanus*; eo quod per traditiones et διεστεώσεις suas, legis præcepta dissipaverint atque maculaverint. Et has esse *duas domus*, quæ salvatorem non receperint, qui factus sit eis in ruinam et in scandalum." *Opera*, IV. p. 32. (*P.*)

in the divinity of the apostles, and that of all the preachers of the gospel. But having no better evidence of the orthodoxy of the *Nazarenes*, you were obliged to make the best of this; which will prove a great deal too much.

I wonder, however, that this mode of interpreting scripture does not stagger even yourself. I thought that the most orthodox of the present day had believed that the person characterized by the title of *the Lord of Hosts* had been not *the Son* but *the Father*. If the *Lord*, that is, *Jehovah*, *of Hosts*, which is no doubt synonymous to *Jehovah* absolutely so called, be *the Son*, it will be difficult to find *the Father* any where in the *Old Testament*.

Thus I have considered all the evidence, positive or presumptive, that you have produced for the existence of a church of orthodox Jewish Christians at Jerusalem after the time of *Adrian*. I have particularly considered your five *quotations* from ancient writers, and do not find that so much as one of them is at all to your purpose.

Thus again ends this church of orthodox Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, planted by *Mosheim*, and destroyed by the too copious watering of the Archdeacon of St. Alban's.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

Of the Miraculous Conception.

REV. SIR,

YOUR "Sermon on the Incarnation"* ought to be considered as making part of our controversy; and indeed it might with more propriety have been entitled a Discourse against myself, as you have contrived to introduce into it reflections on every opinion that I have at any time advanced, that you could think would make me appear in an obnoxious light. But for this I am not sorry; because the more those opinions are kept in view, the sooner will the horror they at first inspire go off. In time, mankind will be less offended at them, and may come to approve what they now dislike. As to mere *abuse*, in which light only those reflections can be considered as they appear in this Sermon, I think my *time*, and even my *ink*, of too much value to be thrown away in answering it.

* "Preached—Dec. 25, 1785." Republished in *Tracts*, 1789, pp. 311—329.

As to the *miraculous conception*, to which your Sermon chiefly relates, I do not pretend to make myself a party for or against it, having only endeavoured to supply materials for forming a right judgment in the case. But I cannot help observing that, instead of new *light*, you have thrown upon it a great mass of additional *darkness*, and of a deeper shade than any thing that has been produced by the Christian fathers, at least till long after the Council of *Nice*.

With respect to "the *importance* of the doctrine," you say, that, "as an article of the faith, it is evidently the foundation of the whole distinction between the character of Christ, in the condition of a man, and that of any other prophet. Had the conception of Jesus been in the natural way; had he been the fruit of Mary's marriage with her husband; his intercourse with the Deity could have been of no other kind than the nature of any other man might have equally admitted;——and how it should differ, otherwise than in the degree of frequency and intimacy, it will not be very easy to explain, unless we adhere to the faith transmitted to us from the primitive ages, and believe that the Eternal Word, who was in the beginning with God, and was God, so joined to himself the holy thing which was formed in Mary's womb, that the two natures, from the commencement of the virgin's conception, made one person——Jesus, according to the primitive doctrine, was so united to the ever-living Word, that the very existence of the man consisted in this union."*

"It was," you say, "clearly the doctrine of holy writ, and nothing else, which the fathers asserted, in terms borrowed from the schools of philosophy, when they affirmed that the very principle of personality and individual existence in Mary's son was union with the uncreated Word. A doctrine in which a miraculous conception would have been implied, had the thing not been recorded; since a man conceived in the ordinary way would have derived the principles of his existence from the mere physical powers of generation. Union with the Divine nature could not have been the principle of an existence physically derived from Adam; and that intimate union of God and man in the Redeemer's person, which the Scriptures so clearly assert, had been a physical impossibility."†

You add, "On the other hand, it were not difficult to shew that the miraculous conception, once admitted, natu-

* *Sermon*, p. 7. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 315, 317, 318.
† *Sermon*, p. 11. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 320.

rally brings up after it the great doctrines of the atonement and the incarnation."*

To these uncouth assertions, expressed in language utterly unintelligible, and equally unwarranted by Scripture or reason, I shall make no particular reply. *He that can receive them let him receive them.* I shall only observe, in general, that if I should profess myself an opponent of the doctrine of the miraculous conception, I could not wish for a fuller refutation of it, than your being able to prove that these very absurd doctrines do, as you say, necessarily depend upon it. I shall add, that if Christ had so extraordinary a communication with God, in consequence of his having no father, what must have been the case with Adam, who had neither father nor mother?

When you shall see what I have advanced on this subject in the fourth volume of my *History of early Opinions concerning Christ*, you will be better qualified to write about it than you were at the time of composing this Sermon. This History you ironically call my GREAT WORK, printing it twice in capitals.† This work, which is now before the public, and may be in your hands, you are welcome to treat ironically or seriously as you please.‡ But you will lead many of your readers to conclude that I had myself called it a *great work*, whereas I do not recollect that I have any where called it more than a *large work*, which does not imply so much vanity as you ascribe to me.§ If that work should stand its ground against the fierce attacks of the Archdeacon of St. Alban's, the learned Professor of Arabic at Oxford, the more learned Mr. Howes of Norwich, and the other learned orthodox divines at home and abroad, whose animadversions it openly challenges, it may deserve a more honourable epithet than I have yet given it. At present it is only a candidate for the approbation of those who are proper judges of its merit.

I am, &c.

* *Sermon*, p. 13. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 323.

† *Remarks*, p. 12. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 338, 339.

‡ Dr. Horsley made the election which might have been easily anticipated; nor could the Bishop of St. David's forget the wrongs offered, by Dr. Priestley's Strictures, to the self-importance of the Archdeacon of St. Alban's. His lordship, therefore, collecting his Tracts in 1789, has finished the character of his controversial spirit, in the parting words, at the conclusion of his Preface. There, indeed, he sufficiently proves that *Horsleian*, rather than *Warburtonian*, should, in future, be the description of polemic insolence. The Bishop, also, now reclining on the soft couch of preferment, prudently resolved to remain utterly "ignorant of the contents of four volumes, fraught, as the very title imports, with pernicious heretical theology:" a resolution well suited to the *otium cum dignitate* of a *Lord-Bishop*. See *Tracts*, 1789, pp. xii. xiii.

§ *Remarks*, p. 86. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 409.

LETTER VI.

Miscellaneous Articles.

REV. SIR,

WERE I disposed to indulge myself in noticing all the strange positions and inconclusive reasonings with which your *Remarks* abound, I should make a much larger work than I fear my readers would care to *look through*. Having, therefore, abundantly refuted every thing on which you yourself pretend to lay the most stress, I shall be very short in my remarks on other things, to which, however, you strongly solicit my attention.

I. As to my construction of *the passage in Athanasius*, we are sufficiently come to an issue. I am fully satisfied with what I have advanced in support of it, and have nothing to add; and, contemptuously as you treat it,* I should not feel myself disposed to distrust it on that account, even if I had not the concurrence of such names as *Beausobre* and Dr. *Lardner* in my favour. I do not know that you can produce the name of any writer whatever in favour of your interpretation.

II. With respect to *the passages from Chrysostom*, you will find in my *larger work*, (if you should condescend to look into such a quantity of *unfinished literature,)* that your construction of his meaning is contradicted by himself. You yourself, however, acknowledge all that I want, when you say, "the apostles taught first what was easiest to be learned, and went on to higher points, as the minds of their catechumens became able to bear them."† For, in reality, it makes no difference from whatever *motive* it was that the apostles did not choose to teach the doctrine of Christ's Divinity, or of the Trinity. If Christians were not *taught* those doctrines, they could not *know* them, and consequently they must have been Unitarians, till they were instructed in them; and this, as all the fathers say, was not till the publication of the gospel of John.

The learned and judicious Mr. Basnage, though a *Trinitarian*, very frankly acknowledges that Christ found the Jews in utter ignorance of the divinity of their *Messiah*, that his object was, "to accustom them insensibly to a mystery so much above their reason, and foreseeing that the church

* *Remarks*, p. 32. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 357. † *Ibid.*

would revolt against it." Chrysostom, he says, has succeeded in maintaining this.*

III. You are pleased to ridicule my *Logic*,† "as confounding *being*, *substance*, and *substratum*," and you find me "unapprized of that great principle, without which a logician will handle his tools but awkwardly, that the genus cannot be predicated of the specific differences."‡ I cannot tell where you learned this curious logic, with which I acknowledge I am utterly unacquainted; and I imagine it is equally unknown to common sense. For, according to it, since *men* are divided into *Whites* and *Blacks*, &c. &c., and the Whites may be subdivided into those of *Europe* and *Asia*, &c., and the Blacks into the Negroes of *Africa*, and other distinct species in other parts of the world, it would follow, that it cannot with propriety be said of any particular Whites or Blacks, that they are *men*, and it would be still less proper to say that they are *animals* or *creatures*, and least of all that they are *beings*, that is, that they have any existence at all. However, it is unusually modest in you, to allow that even *great men* have fallen into the same error with myself, in supposing "that Being is an universal *genus*, under which all other *genera* rank *as species*.§ I am content to class with these great men, "greater," as you say, than myself.

IV. I am particularly amused with your account of *the Dissenters* in this country, with whom it may be presumed that I am better acquainted than you are. And yet, in contradiction to what I asserted,‖ and to what I am confident every Dissenting minister, of any denomination whatever, will acknowledge to be true, you largely maintain that *Calvinism is almost extinguished among us*.¶ However, I the

* *Hist. des Juifs*, L. v. Ch. ix. Sect. iii. *(P.)*

† *Remarks*, p. 13. *(P.)* "The GREAT WORK," says Dr. Horsley, "will probably abound in new specimens of the proficiency which he" (Dr. Priestley) "has made in Logic, under the tuition of the great Locke." *Tracts*, p. 339.

‡ *Ibid.* pp. 339, 340. § *Ibid.* p. 340. ‖ *Supra*, pp. 173, 174.

¶ *Remarks*, p. 63. *(P.)* "I now pass," says Dr. Horsley, "to the third fact, which I have taken upon me to establish; the decline of Calvinism, amounting almost to a total extinction of it, among our English Dissenters; who, no long time since, were generally Calvinists." *Tracts*, p. 387. See *ibid.* pp. 387—394.

On the republication of his *Remarks* in 1789, Dr. Horsley, notices "a pamphlet, entitled, 'The Calvinism of the Protestant Dissenters asserted: in a Letter to the Archdeacon of St. Alban's. By *Samuel Palmer*, [see *supra*, p. 276, *Note*,] Pastor of the Independent Congregation at Hackney, 1786.'" Mr. Palmer having alleged the notorious fact, "that a great body of Calvinists concurred in the application to Parliament upon a general principle of liberty, disliking any interference of the magistrate, in religious matters," Dr. Horsley replies,

"If the fact be as Mr. Palmer states it, I can only lament that a republican principle should so strongly have infected so respectable a branch of the Christian Church, as the Calvinists are in my estimation. I believe, however, that the truth

less wonder at your ignorance of *ancient sects* when you so peremptorily decide with respect to *modern ones*, arguing on the most fallacious principles, and neglecting, or despising, the surest and the most easily accessible sources of information. I sincerely wish that the *rational Dissenters* were more numerous than they are; but the smallness of their number, compared to that of the *Calvinistic* Dissenters, is a clear proof of the truth of my general maxim, that great bodies do not soon change their opinions; and that maxim affords the strongest presumption that the body of Christians, having, according to the acknowledgment of all the fathers, been at first *Unitarians*, could not soon become *Trinitarians*. Accordingly, there are the clearest indications that, in fact, they continued to be Unitarians for several centuries.

V. You have taken great but unnecessary pains to prove that the places in which Mr. Lindsey and myself officiate are properly *conventicles*,* because we who preach in them are not authorized by law. It is a matter of little consequence by what name they are called, since, even in the worst and most obnoxious sense of the term, as *places unauthorized by law*, the apostles generally preached in conventicles.

I should think, however, that if, by any accident, an unauthorized Dissenting minister, like myself, should preach in a *parish church*, it would not, on that account, become *a conventicle*, and require reconsecration. And if not, neither does the building in which I officiate, being licensed according to law, and therefore *in itself* no conventicle, become one in consequence of my preaching in it.

VI. You have a whole chapter† on "the general spirit" of my "controversial writings,"‡ in which you take much pains to exhibit me as a man whose designs are hostile to my country, and who has no pretension to the character of "a good Christian and a good subject."§ I rejoice that I am reproached on this account, as I am conscious that it is

is, and is pretty notorious, that Calvinism is gone among the Dissenters of the present times; though, for what reason I presume not to say, the Dissenting Teachers dislike to be told of its extinction." *Ibid.* pp. 396, 397.

* *Remarks*, p. 72. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 394, 395.

† The sixth. *Ibid.* pp. 402—411.

‡ Commencing with Dr. Priestley's "'View of the Principles and Conduct of the Protestant Dissenters, with respect to the Civil and Ecclesiastical Constitution of England,' a pamphlet first published in the year 1769." *Ibid.* pp. 402, 403.

§ "As the analyzer of elastic fluids, he" (Dr. Priestley) "will be long remembered: but he sometimes seems to claim respect as a GOOD CHRISTIAN, and a GOOD SUBJECT. The goodness of his Christianity, and his merit as a subject, are topics upon which it may be indiscreet for the encomiast of Dr. Priestley to enlarge." *Tracts*, pp. 409, 410.

unmerited, and shall only observe, that the same things, and on the very same grounds, were said of *Luther*, and may be said of any man who shall endeavour to reform any thing that he finds established in the country in which he is born. For it is impossible that any man should wish for a new and better state of things, without wishing for an alteration of the old and worse state; and if he may on this account be denominated an enemy to the country in which that old and worst state prevails, a physician must, on the same principle, be deemed the enemy of his patient, whose disorders he wishes to cure, and especially if, in order to it, he has recourse to unpleasing remedies.

At the same time that you profess the greatest moderation, you cannot conceal your secret wishes for the interference of some *aid from a foreign quarter*. You say, indeed, "Whatever Dr. Priestley may affect to think of the intolerance of churchmen in general, or of the Archdeacon of St. Alban's in particular; a churchman lives not in the present age so weak, who would not in policy, if not in love, discourage rather than promote any thing that might be called a persecution of the Unitarian blasphemy, in the person of Dr. Priestley, or of any of his admirers. A churchman lives not so weak as not to know, that persecution is the hotbed in which nonsense and impiety have ever thrived."* I wish, Sir, I could persuade myself that this was true. For there certainly are some very weak churchmen, who, having less confidence in the force of *argument* than you have, may be alarmed too soon, and cry, *The church is in danger;* in which case you would yourself think the interference of *civil power* very proper.

Confiding, however, in the good sense and moderation of my countrymen in general, though not in that of the clergy in particular, I shall persist in using that liberty which the laws *ought* to give me. *Unitarianism* has flourished very well, as you allow, in persecution. Let the experiment be fairly made, and we shall see whether it will not flourish as well in that state of perfect freedom which the generous temper of the times gives us.

In a spirit very different from the general professions quoted above, you cannot forbear to insinuate that my designs are truly alarming to the State, and say, "If Dr. Priestley ever should attempt to execute the smallest part of what he would now be understood to threaten; it may

* *Remarks*, p. 82. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 406.

then, indeed, be expedient that the magistrate should shew that he beareth not the sword in vain."*

You say, "Let us trust for the present, as we securely may, to the trade of the good town of Birmingham, and to the wise connivance of the magistrate, (who watches, no doubt, while he deems it politic to wink,) to nip Dr. Priestley's goodly projects in the bud; which nothing would be so likely to ripen to a dangerous effect, as constraint excessively or unseasonably used. Thanks, however, are due to him from all lovers of their country, for the mischief which he wants not the inclination to do, if he could find the means of doing it. In gratitude's estimation the will is ever to be taken for the deed."† What is this but saying that it would be wise and right to nip my projects even in the bud, if there was any prospect of my succeeding in them? And what could a Bonner or a Gardiner say more? They would never have burned men alive, if it had not been to prevent what they thought to be *mischief*. Indeed, Sir, you do not know what spirit you are of.

But my projects are more than in the bud. I am at this very time actually executing all that I would be understood to threaten, or ever have threatened. I am endeavouring, by all the means in my power, to rouse the attention of thinking men in this country to the corrupt state of the religion that is established in it, and especially to convince them of the mischievous tendency of worshipping Christ as a God, when Christianity disclaims all knowledge of any other God than one, and that *the God and Father of Christ;* being confident, that when this is effected, (and towards this, considerable progress is visibly making every day, and it has met with no obstruction since the commencement of this controversy,) not only will the present forms of Trinitarian worship be abolished, but my countrymen will then thank me and my friends for what we may have contributed towards so glorious a *revolution*. Till this be actually effected, you will naturally call our attempts *rebellious*. In the mean time, convince our governors, if you can, that the country will suffer in its wealth, population, power, &c. &c., by the people becoming Unitarians.

Whatever you may insinuate to the contrary, the real nature and full extent of my views (which I carry on in obedience to a greater power than any in this world) might

* *Remarks*, p. 82. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 405, 406.
† *Remarks*, p. 83. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 406.

easily be seen by yourself, especially in my late *Observations on Freedom of Inquiry in Matters of Religion.** There you might also have seen that the dreadful *engine*, by means of which I hope to accomplish my dangerous designs, is, *free discussion* or *controversy*—an obstinate controversy—in which much *rest*, but I hope no *lives*, will be lost—much *ink*, but no *blood*, will be spilt; and in this I consider the Archdeacon of St. Alban's, Mr. White, Mr. Howes, and all my opponents, as my *coadjutors;* for without such *concurrence* no *controversy* could be carried on. But "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal."

To yourself, Sir, in particular, the world is indebted for whatever there may be of value in my large *History of early Opinions concerning Christ.* For without the link that you put into the chain of *causes and effects*, mechanically operating in my mind, the very idea of that work would not, I believe, have occurred to me. And I trust that a fire still more destructive to error and superstition, and consequently to all the ecclesiastical establishments in the world, which are built upon and promote them, will be raised by the concurrence of your seasonable pains in blowing up the flame of this controversy; which will not, I trust, be extinguished till its end be effectually answered.

Lest you should again relapse into your criminal indolence of *eighteen months*, consider that the great danger on which you, Sir, first sounded the alarm, (and Mr. White has sounded the horn of battle still louder,)† is now more threatening than ever. I hope that you and your brethren will never drop the spirit which breathed in your famous *Charge to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of St. Alban's.* Lest you should remit of your ardour, I shall here recite one paragraph from it.

"The restless spirit of scepticism will suggest difficulties in the system, and create doubts about the particulars of the Christian doctrine: difficulties must be removed, and doubts must be satisfied. But above all, the scruples must be composed, which the refinements of a false philosophy, patronized as they are in the present age by men no less amiable for the general purity of their manners, than distinguished by their scientific attainments, will be too apt to raise in the minds of the weaker brethren. And this is the service to which they, whom the indulgence of Providence hath released from the more laborious offices of the priest-

* *Appendix*, No. XI. † See *ibid.* No. XII.; *supra*, p. 276, *Note* †.

hood, stand peculiarly engaged. To them their more occupied brethren have a right to look up, in these emergencies, for support and succour in the common cause. It is for them to stand forth the champions of the common faith, and the advocates of their order. It is for them to wipe off the aspersion injuriously cast upon the sons of the Establishment, as uninformed in the true grounds of the doctrine which they teach, or insincere in the belief of it. To this duty they are indispensably obliged by their providential exemption from work of a harder kind. It is the proper business of the station which is allotted them in Christ's household. And deep will be their shame, and insupportable their punishment, if, in the great day of reckoning, it should appear, that they have received the wages of a service which hath never been performed."*

If, Sir, you read the above as often as you ought to do, you will never, in this very critical situation, when the enemy is at every gate, and scaling every rampart of your old and ruinous fortress, indulge yourself in your *soft couch of preferment*, but, together with your brethren, exert yourself *pro aris et focis*.

VII. You say, that as you consider this controversy "now brought to a state resembling that of war, in which no quarter is to be given or accepted," you think yourself "at liberty to strike at *your* enemy without remorse, in whatever quarter *you* may perceive an opening."† This fell language may well make me shudder at my situation, especially as in my *large work*, at this very time probably in your cruel and remorseless hands, there must be many openings, and your vigilance in discovering them cannot be doubted. I trust, however, that though you may draw *blood* in many places, you will not be able to reach any vital part. Out of eighteen hundred references, I will gladly compound for eighteen being found defective, when, of no more than *five* in this performance of yours, not one proves to be to your purpose.

As you have apprized me of your resolution to strike at me without remorse, wherever you can find an opening, I may presume that the parts at which you have aimed your *remorseless blows* are all that you thought vulnerable. But, Sir, you are not skilful in the art of tormenting, and, like the

* *Tracts*, pp. 4, 5.

† *Remarks*, p. 78. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 402.

Indian warrior, I will teach you how you might wound me much more deeply:

Your chief wish is evidently to represent me as an enemy to the civil and ecclesiastical constitution of this country. Now had you been better *redde* in my writings, (but they are happily too voluminous for you to *look through*,) you might have found passages more to your purpose than any that you have selected. You have gone back as far as the year 1769; but you have overlooked the Sermon which I preached on resigning my pastoral office at Leeds, in 1773, one paragraph from which I shall insert for your use on another occasion:

"All who are interested in the support of these *anti-christian establishments*, which usurp an undue authority over the consciences of men, and whose wealth and power are advanced by them, are *at this very time* in a state of general consternation, both at home and abroad; seeing their principles and maxims universally decried, and their unjust claims assailed from a great variety of quarters, so that *their kingdom* is now 'full of darkness, and they are gnawing their tongues for pain,' but 'without repenting of their deeds.' *Rev.* xvi. 10," &c. &c. &c.*

VIII. As you talk of "culling the flowers of my composition,"† I shall, in return, present you with some of your own. If they please so much when separate, what must be their beauty and fragrance when united!

"Insufficient antagonist;"‡ "confident ignorance,—fiery resentment,—virulent invective," and "fierceness of wrath;—incompetency in the subject;"§ "fraudulent trick,—he meant to put upon the public,"‖ but not on Dr. Horsley; "unfinished erudition, shallow criticism, weak argument, and unjustifiable art to cover the weakness and to supply the want of argument;"¶ "the vain, indignant struggle of a strong animal which feels itself overcome; the meer growling of the tiger in the toils;"** a "never-to-be-forgotten attempt upon a passage in St. John's First Epistle;"†† a

* Vol. XV. p. 26. † *Remarks*, p. 15. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 342.
‡ *Remarks*, p. 1. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 333.
§ *Remarks*, p. 2. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 334.
‖ *Remarks*, p. 9. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 337.
¶ *Remarks*, p. 13. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 340.
** *Remarks*, p. 14. *(P.)* *Tracts*, p. 341.
†† *Remarks*, p. 18. [*Tracts*, p. 344.] Referring to a supposed attempt to impose upon my readers, by a false quotation of the common English version of the Bible. A man really capable of this, could only be fit for Bedlam or Tyburn; and yet Dr. Horsley, in the very publication in which he advanced that charge,

" professor of Greek," unqualified to teach " the elements of the language ;"* " a false and fraudulent representation of an argument ;"† " precipitance in assertion, and talent in accommodating his story to his opinions ;"‡ " one instance out of a great number, of his shameless intrepidity in assertion ;" § " enraged heresiarch ;" ‖ prudence in not yet declaring " his antipathy" to the civil as well as " ecclesiastical" constitution " of his country ;" ¶ declaiming " in his conventicle to enlighten the minds and excite the zeal of the mechanics of the populous town of Birmingham ;"** the " excessive admiration"†† in which I hold myself; unjust claim to the titles of " a good Christian," or " good subject,"‡‡ &c. &c. &c.

In connexion with this, let the reader now see what you say in other passages : " If upon any branch of Christian duty my conscience be at perfect ease, the precept ' Judge not' is that which I trust I have not transgressed ;" and, " from my youth up, I have been averse to censorious judgment."§§ Who then, Sir, can deny that an excess of meekness and moderation forms the leading feature in your character ?

Having taken from me every moral quality, all knowledge of human nature, history, logic, and every thing requisite to qualify me for the controversy in which I have had the presumption to engage, together with the very elements of the *Greek* language, and even of *Latin*, I think myself happy that, having asserted your own right to all virtue and all knowledge, you have not yet expressly denied my ability to write a little tolerably intelligible *English*, and I shall endeavour to make the best use that I can of it, before the fatal day shall come when I may be stripped of this also.

But, dropping this style, I must on one subject be a little serious with you. You say that I have charged you with

said my " virtues were great and amiable ;" as evident a contradiction as the doctrine of *Transubstantiation* or *the Trinity*. But as *these* have been believed, so may the other. (*P.*)

* *Remarks*, p. 34. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 358.
† *Remarks*, p. 42. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 366.
‡ *Remarks*, p. 43. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 367.
§ *Remarks*, p. 47. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 373.
‖ *Remarks*, p. 51. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 376.
¶ *Remarks*, p. 79. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 402.
** *Remarks*, p. 81. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 404.
†† *Remarks*, p. 86. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 409.
‡‡ *Remarks*, p. 87. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 409, 410.
§§ *Remarks*, p. 87. (*P.*) *Tracts*, pp. 409, 410.

*gross and wilful misrepresentation.** This I deny; and if I have inadvertently said any thing that implies as much, I shall publicly ask your pardon. I must, therefore, insist upon your making good this accusation. You repeatedly charge *me* with wilful misrepresentation; but I doubt not you really believe me to be that fraudulent and base character which alone is capable of such conduct, and, therefore, you say no worse of me than you really believe. I do not think so ill of you, and, therefore, I do not use that language in speaking of you. I have, indeed, called you *a falsifier of history*, because you have added, and (as you now acknowledge) *knew* that you added, to the accounts of ancient historians. But then you really believed that the transactions passed as you related them, and that the particulars which you *added*, had been *omitted* by the early writers. This is far short of a *wilful lie*. After what I had written on this subject, in my Eighteenth Letter to you, [p. 264,] I am surprised that you should write as you do now. How different must be your feelings from mine!

The *conclusion* of your remarks, which is so little of a piece with the body of the work that it puts me in mind of the introduction to Horace's *Art of Poetry*,† is something extraordinary, and indeed shocking. After ascribing to me the worst designs and the worst passions that can occupy the head or heart of man, and for once intimating the possibility of something wrong lurking unperceived in your own bosom, speaking of the awful solemnities of the last day, you express a desire that "whatever of intemperate wrath and carnal anger has mixed itself on either side with the zeal with which we have pursued our fierce contention, may then be forgiven to us both; a prayer," you say, "which *you* breathe from the bottom of your soul," and to which you add, that if *I* have "any part in the spirit of a Christian," I shall, "upon my bended knees, say, Amen."‡

Which of us has been actuated by the bad spirit which you describe, our readers will infer, not from the declarations of

* *Remarks*, p. 71. *(P.)* Dr. Horsley, I apprehend, corrected this sentence in his re-publication, 1789, where he only says, "I have been charged with misrepresentation." *Tracts*, p. 394.

† "Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam
Jungere si velit, et varias inducere plumas,
Undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum
Desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne;
Spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici?" *(P.)*

‡ *Tracts*, p. 411.

either of us, but from our general temper, conduct, and manner of writing. If *I* be the man you describe, I can have no hope of forgiveness at the awful period to which you refer, unless I repent and reform *now*. If, contrary to the solemn declaration of your perfect innocence, quoted above, you had, when you wrote this *conclusion*, a latent suspicion that all had not been right on your side, you certainly, Sir, ought to have paused, have carefully revised what you had written, and have expunged what you could not approve. Boasting of more Christianity than you will allow to me, you ought to teach me, by your example, what it is that our religion requires in these cases, and not give any occasion to an unauthorized teacher in a conventicle to instruct an Archdeacon of the Church of England in one of the first lessons in the Christian school.*

I am, Rev. Sir,

Your very humble Servant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

* The following letter, in the Gentleman's Magazine, (LIX. 211,) did not occur to me till after Dr. Priestley's remarks on "the *Parmenides*," (*supra*, pp. 234, 235, 237,) had passed through the press:

"Mr. Urban, March 2, 1789.

"The learned Bishop of St. David's, in his 'Remarks upon Dr. Priestley's Second Letters,' p. 11, [*Tracts*, p. 338,] sarcastically exclaims, 'Dr. Priestley has been reading the Parmenides! Having taught the Greek language several years at Warrington, he conceived himself well qualified to encounter that profound book. The benefit which he has received from the performance of this knotty task exactly corresponds with my notion of his abilities for the undertaking. He has found the whole treatise unintelligible.'

"Dr. Priestley is not the only scholar whom this misfortune (if indeed it be a misfortune) hath befallen. The late Dr. Burton, of whom his ingenious and candid biographer, [Dr. Kippis,] says, 'Prejudice itself cannot deny that he was an able divine and a sound scholar,' (*Biog. Brit.* III. 48,) has made a similar confession. Writing to one of his learned friends, a Prussian gentleman, with whom he became acquainted at Oxford, he complains of the *Parmenides*, that he found the whole work obscure and paradoxical, full of mysteries and enigmas, which he could not comprehend or expound.—Dr. Priestley, therefore, has at least a very famous Oxford tutor, with whom to share the sarcasm of his learned adversary.

"This remarkable coincidence of sentiment in two such eminent persons will not have been pointed out in vain, should it effectually caution any of your readers, and particularly those of the clerical order—not to be led away, in an important controversy, by a 'haughty style, and contemptuous airs,' from the diligent and patient investigation of truth.

"Yours, &c.

"T. A. S."

STRICTURES

ON

Mr. HOWES'S

Ninth Number of Observations on Books,

ANCIENT AND MODERN.*

In Mr. Howes I have a much more respectable, and a somewhat more temperate antagonist than the Archdeacon of St. Alban's; but I am sorry to find, that he has employed his ingenuity and learning (or, to use a favourite phrase of his own, his *talent of disputation)* where neither of them can possibly avail him; the former in exculpating himself from the charge of representing me as an unbeliever, and the latter in attempting to prove that the body of the Jews expected *a God in their Messiah.*

I do not rest my accusation on the construction of particular words and phrases, though that would abundantly justify it. Let any man of common sense read his *Discourse,*† and then say, whether one great object of it was not to represent me as one of that class of persons who, having formerly been professed unbelievers in Christianity, on finding that ground untenable, now only *pretend* to believe it, calling themselves *rational Christians,* when in reality they are no Christians at all. He has no occasion to have recourse to his dictionary for the meaning of the word *pretend.* Does any man ever content himself with saying of another, that he *pretends* to a particular character, if he really thinks that he has a just claim to it? I say of Mr. Gibbon, that he pretends to be a believer in Christianity; but then I mean what, if I use that language at all, I ought to mean, viz. that he *only pretends* to believe it, while he is artfully endeavouring to sap the very foundations of it. The same is the natural inference from all that Mr. Howes had said with respect to me.

If Mr. Howes really thinks me to be a believer in Christianity, as he now says, it would much better have become him ingenuously to acknowledge his fault, and to ask pardon for it. At present his apology only aggravates his offence.

* From 1776 to 1800. Collected into four vols. 8vo.

† See *Appendix,* No. XIII.

However, it affects himself only, and not me. We have one common Master and Judge, who knows both what he really intended by his account of me, and what I am; and by his sentence, and not by that of Mr. Howes, I shall stand or fall.

As to Mr. Howes's attempt, in this publication, to prove that the body of the Jewish nation really believed in the pre-existence and divinity of their *Messiah*, it must appear perfectly futile to any person who shall read what they will find on that subject in my *History of early Opinions concerning Christ*. He will there find that even the Christian fathers, eager as they were to press the *Jewish Scriptures* into the service of the doctrine of the Trinity, did not pretend to have the body of the *Jewish nation* on their side; and would not they have been as glad as Mr. Howes now appears to be, to have found that belief among them? What some particular Jewish cabbalists (whose writings are remarkable for their ænigmatical obscurity) may have said, in a later period, is nothing to the purpose. To prove the easy reception of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ in the primitive times, Mr. Howes must find the doctrine of the divinity of the *Messiah* to have been the general belief of the Jewish nation in the age of the apostles. The opinion of such a *Platonist* as *Philo*, if we could be sure of it, can never pass for that of the Jewish nation in general, who certainly were not Platonists. *Josephus* is at least as good an authority as *Philo;* but is it probable that the Jewish nation, or the *Pharisees* in general, were believers in the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, though this writer says they were? *Josephus* himself, and a few others, might believe that doctrine; and, from a natural bias to add to the respectability of our own party, he might give that representation of the faith of his sect in general. But *Philo* does not say that the Jews in general interpreted the Scriptures as he did.

In my History, Mr. Howes will find the most express testimony, that the Jews, in every age, from our Saviour's time to the present, were believers in the simple humanity of their *Messiah*. The learned of that nation have always laughed at the pretence of orthodox Christians to prove that their ancestors ever believed any thing else. Let Mr. Howes get acquainted with any learned *Jews* in this country, and they will give him the satisfaction they have given me on the subject. And, is it not more likely that they should know the real sentiments of their countrymen, and of their own writers, with which they are continually conversant, than we can pretend to be? They give me the strongest assurances that

the belief of their *Messiah* being a God, or that he pre-existed, neither is now, nor ever was, the faith of any of their countrymen. On the contrary, they hold these doctrines in the greatest abhorrence. Since this was indisputably the case, both in the time of the Christian fathers and at present, let Mr. Howes shew in which of the middle ages that doctrine was first introduced, how far it spread, and when it was deserted by them. Let him first answer what the learned *Basnage*, who was a Trinitarian, has written on the subject,* and then I will consider his arguments.

I am, indeed, astonished that neither Dr. Horsley nor Mr. Howes should so much as mention the name of *Basnage* in treating of this subject, which he has so learnedly and so ably discussed, and who has so particularly considered what *Cudworth*, *Allix* and *Bull*, had advanced upon it. The character of M. Basnage, in *Moreri's* Dictionary, by *Le Clerc*, is as follows: "Monsieur Basnage étoit vrai jusques dans les plus petites choses. Sa candeur, sa franchise, sa bonne foi, ne paroissent pas moins dans ses ouvrages, que la profondeur de son erudition." What will foreigners say of Englishmen still retailing the stale arguments of the three writers above-mentioned, without any notice of what has been replied to them by such a man as this? Notwithstanding the acknowledged excellence of his character, there will be nothing extraordinary in Dr. Horsley's representing him as a *wilful liar*. If any *character* could have been a security against such gross insult, it would have been that of *Origen*.

I am not much acquainted with the Jewish *cabbalists*, except through the medium of *Basnage* and others, and therefore will not answer for the meaning of the writer Mr. Howes quotes, though it is of no signification what his meaning was; but of *Philo* I have some knowledge; and his meaning, I am confident, Mr. Howes has most grossly mistaken. Referring to that passage in *Philo*, which will be found in my *History*,† he says, that "the chief, or *most ancient Logos* (as Philo expresses himself) is likewise sometimes mentioned by him as being actually *resident in* the high-priest of the Jews, and even as being the *very same* person with the high-priest, as if they were blended into a compound individual; in consequence of which, the high-priest is there spoken of, and declared to be no longer *a man*,—and of this

* See *supra*, pp. 223, 224, 299, 300.

† "Of Early Opinions," B. i. Ch. viii. See Vol. VI.

divine Logos he says also, that he *dwells* in God.—He goes on to describe this *divine Logos*, thus *united to* the high-priest, as having had God for his father, and as being *anointed* with oil at his generation, or first government.* Since, then, Philo here ranked the high-priest as being the same with the *divine Logos*, and in other places, calls the *divine Logos* a high-priest, and conceives them capable of forming a compound individual; it is plain that the popular theology had no objection to a similar compound, formed out of the *divine Logos* and a *human* Messiah, descended from David; which *union* they would naturally signify under the idea of the latter being *anointed Christ*, who would consequently be then no longer considered as *mere man*."†

Now, nothing can be more evident, even to a no very sagacious reader, than that *Philo*, in this passage, is merely indulging himself in one of his extravagant allegorical interpretations of scripture; supposing that what Moses says concerning the *high-priest* was not to be understood of any *man*, but of the *Platonic divine Logos*. This writer abounds in such ridiculous interpretations of scripture, and in them he was too readily followed by the Christian fathers. But Mr. Howes's interpretation of *Philo* is more extraordinary than *Philo's* interpretation of Moses. Besides, can this same divine Logos have a proper *hypostatical union* with the Jewish high-priest, (probably every Jewish high-priest,) and with Jesus, the son of Mary? What a strange system will this make!

Mr. Howes's construction of the passage, which he has quoted from *Tertullian*, is no less wide of his purpose; but I shall not enlarge upon this topic till I see how Mr. Howes will acquit himself with respect to what he has engaged to do.

If any man can read the evidence that I have produced in my *History*, in favour of Unitarianism having been the original faith of the Christian church; the acknowledgments of the orthodox fathers, that this doctrine was so prevalent among both the Jews and Gentiles, that it required the greatest caution in the apostles to teach them any more sublime doctrine; that the doctrines of the divinity and pre-existence of Christ were not taught with clearness and effect, except by *John*, at the time of the publication of his Gospel, after that of the three others; that the common people, who were *Unitarians*, were extremely shocked at the first proposal of the doctrine of the Trinity in a later period; though, after this, the *Trinitarians* expressed great contempt

* *Critical Observations*, pp. 46, 47. *(P.)* † *Ibid.* p. 49. *(P.)*

and dislike of the Unitarian doctrine,* &c. &c. &c.; and yet maintain that there were no proper Unitarians in the apostolic age, and that which immediately followed it, I shall think him capable of undertaking to prove that this country was not inhabited by *Britons* before the arrival of the *Romans;* but that the Romans themselves were the *Aborigines* of the country.

We are promised, however, abundant evidence of this singular position; and as Mr. Howes maintains, that those whom I have called *Unitarians* in that age differed from the orthodox in nothing more than in supposing that the union of the divine and human nature of Christ commenced so late as his baptism, and not so early as at his conception, I take it for granted that we shall find this mighty difference of opinion distinctly marked by many of the ancient writers, and reasons given why this difference with respect to a *date* only, was considered as of so much consequence; for that the difference was *thought* to be considerable, and especially that the orthodox doctrine was thought to be much more *difficult* and *sublime* than the other, is too evident to be denied. Now I should think that it was quite as difficult to conceive of this hypostatical union taking place in a man full grown, as in an embryo in the womb. But Mr. Howes will certainly find *something* to say in support of so singular and favourite an *hypothesis* as that which he has adopted; and I am willing to wait his time.

In the mean time it is a particular satisfaction to me that this discussion is at length undertaken by Mr. Howes, who is unquestionably a scholar, and who is at the same time so expeditious in his motions; as we shall now see all that *can* be produced against my argument, and the learned will not long be in suspense with respect to it; and then, I hope, it will appear that Mr. Howes is greatly mistaken in his assertion, that no good ever arose from controversy. But if that was his serious opinion, how can he justify himself in engaging in *this* controversy, in which he is entirely a volunteer; and how comes it that every thing that he has written is controversial? Both his *Observations on Books*, and his *Sermon*, are altogether such. Much as I have written in controversy, from the fullest conviction of the utility of it, (which at least justifies me to myself,) the far greater part of my publications are of a different nature.

* That the Unitarians were *at first* considered as *no heretics*, and *afterwards* as heretics, Mr. Howes represents (*Pref.* p. viii.) as "an inconsistency above his comprehension." *How he can imagine this*, is above my comprehension. But we shall, probably, have sufficient opportunity of explaining ourselves. (*P.*)

Defences

OF

UNITARIANISM.

1786, 1787.

DEFENCES OF UNITARIANISM,

FOR THE YEAR 1786,

Containing

LETTERS

TO

DR. HORNE, DEAN OF CANTERBURY,

TO THE YOUNG MEN,

WHO ARE IN A COURSE OF EDUCATION FOR THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY,

AT THE

Universities of Oxford and Cambridge;

TO

DR. PRICE, AND TO MR. PARKHURST,

ON THE

Subject of the Person of Christ.

Tandem Ductores, audita cæde suorum,
Conveniunt——.

VIRGIL.

[*Birmingham*, 1787.]

PREFACE.

THE readers of this controversy concerning *the person of Christ*, will, I doubt not, congratulate themselves on seeing it in new hands, and in those of persons who promise to conduct it both with better temper, and with more knowledge of the subject, than it was done by Dr. Horsley.

According to appearance, we must now despair of hearing any thing more from the Archdeacon of St. Alban's.* But this is not to be regretted, while such a man as the Dean of Canterbury has announced his entrance into the same field of combat, while Mr. Howes (though his motions are more tardy than he gave us reason to expect they would be†) re-

* He, however, re-appeared as Bishop of St. David's. See *supra*, p. 298, *Note* ‡.
† See *supra*, p. 314.

mains in it; while Mr. White, the learned Professor of Arabic at Oxford, discovers so much laudable zeal in the cause of orthodoxy;* and while others, of no less erudition,† I am informed, are preparing to join the corps, now that they see the danger to be pressing.

Indeed, in a case of so great emergency, when so much may be lost, viz. the uninterrupted possession of ages, and so much *honour* (to say nothing of *emolument)* is to be acquired by preserving it, who, that has any confidence in his prowess, would not crowd to the standard, erected by the Dean of Canterbury, who so loudly calls upon all the friends of orthodoxy, to *contend earnestly for* THEIR *faith?* Without any disparagement to this truly learned and worthy dignitary, I hope his call will soon be answered by numbers, still higher in rank, and in fame, than even himself.

To be perfectly serious, I must acknowledge that it gives me more pleasure than I can express, to see such a prospect of this very important question, concerning *the person of Christ*, being thoroughly discussed, and perhaps finally terminated; so that the generality of those who give attention to these subjects, may have reason to think, that every consideration on which their judgment ought to be formed, will be fairly before them; that every weak or doubtful argument will appear to be so, and that nothing will remain in the scale but what has unquestionable weight.

The learned and inquisitive will then no longer *halt between two opinions.* If Christ be truly *God*, they will receive and honour him as such; but if he be only *a man* sent by God, they will honour him as the ambassador of God, not so much regarding himself as *Him that sent him;* and whatever shall be the settled opinion of the *learned*, it will, in due time, become that of the unlearned, and of the Christian world in general. To be the instruments in the hands of Divine Providence in bringing about so great an event, is so honourable, that I hope it cannot fail to excite the laudable ambition of many. Such an opportunity of distinguishing themselves, and of serving the cause of truth, may not soon occur again.

I feel more particular satisfaction in that part of this generous contest which relates to Dr. Price, partly because it is the first opportunity that has been afforded me of dis-

* In Notes to "Sermons at the *Bampton Lecture*," 1784. See *supra*, p. 276, *Note* †.

† In this I alluded more particularly to Mr. Parkhurst, whose work having appeared since this Preface was written, I have had an opportunity of replying to it at the close of the present publication. (*P.*) See *infra.*

cussing in this manner the subject of *Arianism;* and also because it enables me to give another example of the manner in which I most wish to conduct a controversy, to shew that friends to each other may, at the same time, be greater friends to *truth*, and that they can even *earnestly contend* for this, without the least hazard of a breach in their friendship.

It is too common for persons engaged in controversy to lose sight of *truth*, and to contend for *victory* only; and when that is the object, those passions which enter into other contests, which have the same object, enter into this; and the effect is both unpleasant in itself, and in a variety of respects, unfavourable to the cause of truth. But in our former discussion of the doctrines of *Materialism* and *Necessity*,* nothing of this kind appeared on either side, and the door shall be as religiously shut against it in this.

That discussion was brought to its proper termination; each of us having advanced every thing that we thought proper in support of our respective opinions, and then we made a joint publication of the whole. In this case, my friend has declared his resolution not to engage in any controversy; and, as the time is approaching when I may think proper to make a similar resolution, I shall not urge him on the subject; but I write with his full consent; and we both of us earnestly wish that some other common friend, at least, some other learned *Arian*, who, like him, shall be actuated by a pure love of truth, may take his place. Whoever he be, I will engage that he shall have no reason to complain of *me*. He shall have nothing to fear but fair, dispassionate *argument;* and if he be worthy to succeed Dr. Price, it will be a matter of indifference to him whether the friendly contest end in his favour or in mine.

My highly valued friend will himself not fail to give due attention to what we write; and if he should see reason to change his opinion with respect to any particular article in the discussion, I have no doubt but that he will generously avow it in the future editions of his *Sermons*. Should he be induced to abandon *Arianism* altogether, (O that this were not too much to be expected of *man!*) I have as little doubt, that he would take an early opportunity of acknowledging it, and with that ingenuous frankness which marks his character. In this case, we should perhaps also have from his hand, a striking view of the *Socinian*, or, as he himself would then call it, the only proper *Unitarian* doctrine. There is

* See Vol. IV. pp. 18—121.

an energy in what he delivers, as coming directly from the heart, which few writers have attained. It is not mere mental ability that can enable a man to write like him. It requires perfect integrity, as well as a sound understanding. Better were it to be in any error with such a heart, than have the best head, and hold all truth, without it.

Writing to the Dean of Canterbury, who is at the head of a college in *Oxford*,* I was insensibly led to address myself to *the young men who are in a course of education for the Christian ministry at the two universities.* For this, I hope, to obtain their pardon, if not their thanks. What I have done proceeds from an earnest desire to awaken their attention to a subject that most nearly concerns them, and through them *the public*, whom they are destined to serve.

To have gone on, as many have done, from generation to generation, subscribing what they have not considered, and then maintaining it because they have subscribed it, and because they would be distressed if they should abandon at once the fruits of their subscription, can only have arisen from a want of attention to so serious a subject. The most important and the plainest of all truths may not be perceived, till it be distinctly pointed out. But when attention is excited, the ingenuous youth, who would otherwise have gone heedlessly on, as thousands have done before him, will start at the apprehension of a wrong step in his conduct, as at the sight of a precipice before him; and then, whatever be the inconvenience of retreating, he will see that it must be better than to proceed.

May the *God of truth* open all our minds, and *lead us into all truth;* and especially may he give us the courage to acknowledge it, when it is discovered. The consequences of this may, in certain circumstances, be painful, but they are temporary; whereas, the consequence of persisting in error, and of living in the perpetual violation of integrity, while it fills the ingenuous mind with anguish here, must be followed by much greater anguish hereafter. Such conduct requires only to be fairly exhibited. It must at once be seen to be unworthy of a man, and much more so of a Christian, and a Christian minister.

As I wish not to trouble my readers with more publications in this controversy than may be necessary, and I

* In 1768, Dr. Horne was appointed President of Magdalen College; and in 1791, Bishop of Norwich. He died in 1792, aged 62.

expect, at least hope, to have many more antagonists than have yet appeared, I here inform them, that I shall not make an immediate reply to every particular publication, but shall generally wait a proper time, in order to take into consideration what may be advanced by several of them, as I have done on this occasion.

It is my earnest wish that this important controversy with *Trinitarians*, and especially with *Arians*, may come to a proper termination. Nothing, as I have more than once declared, shall be wanting on my part to bring it to this desirable issue; and I pledge myself to the public, not to pass without notice any objection to which I may be unable to make a satisfactory reply. If it relate to a subject of much consequence, I shall not only make a frank acknowledgment of my mistake, but take the most early opportunity of doing it; but if it only affect an article of small consequence, I may content myself with correcting my works, if they should ever come to another edition. If any person think me superior to my adversaries with respect to force of *argument*, (which can only arise from the goodness of the cause which I have espoused,) I am determined to give them proofs of a still greater superiority with respect to *ingenuousness*.

Let it be understood, however, that this engagement relates only to the *history* that I have given of the rise and progress of the *Trinitarian* doctrine, of *Arianism*, and of *Unitarianism*, in the early ages, which is a proper field for the *learned in ecclesiastical history*, and not to that branch of the controversy which has been so long canvassed, that very little that is *new* can be expected to be advanced on any side, I mean the *doctrine of the Scriptures* on the subject, any farther than it may be introduced incidentally, and in connexion with the historical discussion.

But this historical discussion, when the nature of it is well considered, cannot, as I have frequently observed, but be thought to decide concerning the whole controversy; for, if it be true, as I have endeavoured to prove by copious historical evidence, not only that proper Unitarians were in communion with the Catholic church, and were not classed with *heretics;* but that the great mass of unlearned Christians continued to be simply *Unitarians* till the second and third century, it will hardly be doubted but that their instructors, viz. the apostles, and first disciples of Christ, were Unitarians also, and therefore, that no other interpretation of the Scriptures than that of the *Unitarians*, as opposed to that of the *Trinitarians*, or *Arians*, can be the true one.

LETTERS TO Dr. HORNE,

*DEAN OF CANTERBURY.**

Ω φιλοι, ϐ γαρ πω τι κακων αδαημονες ειμεν.
Ου μεν δη τοδε μειζον επι κακον, η ὁτε ΚΥΚΛΩΨ
Ειλει ενι σπηι γλαφυρῳ, κρατερῃφι ϐιῃφιν·
Αλλα και ενθεν εμῃ αρετῃ, ϐολῃ τε, νοῳ τε,
Εκφυγομεν.

HOMERI ODYSS.

Si pereo, manibus hominum periisse juvabit.

VIRGIL.

LETTER I.

Introduction, and of the Charge of Ignorance or Insincerity in the Defenders of the Doctrine of the Trinity.

REV. SIR,

AFTER being engaged in a controversy relating to the doctrine of the *Trinity*, with some very insolent, and, as I think I have shewn, insufficient antagonists, I rejoice that in *you*, I have met with one who is truly candid, learned, and in every view respectable. You, Sir, are as sensible as myself of the importance of this discussion, and have the same wish to conduct it in the most proper, that is, in the most amicable manner, as lovers of truth, and not contenders for victory. "We must not," you say, "engage knowingly in a bad cause; nor persevere, if, in the process, we shall discover our cause to be a bad one."† "No mischief will arise from discussion. Truth always has been, and always will be, a gainer by it."‡

With respect to the subject of this controversy, you very justly say, if the doctrine of the Trinity be not true, "the Christian church has been guilty of idolatry,"§ and though I do not think it is with equal justice that you add, "from

* Occasioned by his two Sermons, published together in 1786. These were a *Discourse* on "The Duty of contending for the Faith, preached at the primary Visitation" of Archbishop Moore, "in the Cathedral and Metropolitical Church, July 1, 1786;" and "a Discourse on the Trinity in Unity." See Bishop Horne's Works, 1809, VI. pp. 60—98.

† *Sermons*, 1786, p. 9. *(P.)* *Works*, 1809, VI. p. 67.

‡ *Sermons*, p. 15. *(P.)* *Works*, VI. p. 73.

§ *Sermons*, p. 2. *(P.)* *Works*, VI. p. 61.

the very days of the apostles," it has certainly been the case from a very early period. Against an accusation of this magnitude, you, who hold the doctrine, certainly do well to defend yourselves, and to exert all your powers to repel the attack that is made upon you.

You agree with me in having no dislike to controversy in general, saying, " It is a wholesome exercise for us. It excites attention, and prevents indifference, the enemy, of all others, most to be dreaded."* In this, however, you differ very widely from Mr. Howes, who, though he voluntarily engages in this discussion, is of opinion that no good ever arose from controversy.†

As you and I, Sir, agree in so many particulars, I flatter myself that, in due time, we shall be able to bring this important controversy to a proper termination, so that whatever may be the case with respect to ourselves, and others engaged in the discussion (for whose prejudices allowance will easily be made) attentive readers will be able to perceive on which side the truth lies.

Before I proceed any farther, I wish to set you right with respect to a charge against me, that I am confident is ill-founded, viz. that I consider all the defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity as either ignorant or insincere.‡ I really cannot imagine on what it is that this supposition is founded; since, in a variety of places in my writings, I have expressed the greatest respect for some of those who have defended the doctrines of the Church of Rome, as well as those of the Church of England; and I have no doubt of their being equal to any *Unitarians* with respect to ability, learning, or integrity.

This charge, I suppose, you have adopted from Dr. Horsley, who advanced it in his *Letters to me*. But you should not have repeated it without having read, and noticed, my reply to him on that subject, in my *Second Set of Letters to him*, in which among other things, I say, " I do not pretend to recollect all that I have written; but I have such a consciousness of never having *meant*, or *intended to say*, what Dr. Horsley here charges me with, that I will venture to assert, that he cannot have any more authority for this, than for the privileges granted to the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem on their abandoning the ceremonies of

* *Sermons*, p. 15. (*P.*) *Works*, VI. p. 73. † See *supra*, p. 314.

‡ P. 30. (*P.*) Dr. Priestley here, I apprehend, refers to a passage in " an advertisement subjoined by Dr. Horne to these Sermons in 1786, declaring his intention to answer the objections against the divinity of Christ, which had been urged of late." See Rev. William Jones's " Life of Dr. Horne." *Works*, I. p. 146

their old religion.—I shall therefore consider this charge of Dr. Horsley as a mere *calumny*, till he shall produce some evidence for it. And if, in any of my writings, he *can* find sufficient authority for his accusation, I here retract what I advanced, and ask pardon for it."*

As Dr. Horsley did publish a Reply to my *Letters*, without producing any proof of his charge, I am at liberty to consider it not only as *a calumny*, but as *an acknowledged one*, with the aggravation of his not having the grace to ask pardon for it, which certainly a regard to truth, and to the public, called for. Since you, Sir, choose to take up the matter where he left it, I am under a necessity of calling upon *you*, to do what he ought to have done, or to acknowledge your inability to do it, and consequently the injustice of your accusation. I have the same right to call upon Dr. Parr, who has likewise recorded this accusation in the notes to his *Sermon on Education*.†

It is true that I do not think quite so highly of Dr. Horsley's literature as you do, but among other defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity, I am far from denying *him* a competent share of it: though he has, upon all occasions, expressed the greatest contempt for mine, besides charging me repeatedly with the most *fraudulent practices* in the conduct of this controversy. I wish his ingenuousness had been equal to his ability, or his learning. As to *your* learning, Sir, no person who has seen your *Version of the Psalms*, can call it in question, and that you are a real believer in the doctrine of the Trinity, as laid down in the *Athanasian* Creed, it is impossible to entertain a doubt, after your very solemn declaration to that purpose; when you say, "I declare before God, in the sincerity of my soul, upon the best judgment I can form, I am verily persuaded it is the doctrine of the scripture, and of the primitive church."‡

I am far from being offended at the compliment you pay Dr. Horsley, as "evidently" an *over-match* for me, "in point of learning,"§ and do not wonder that you should think that, "the thanks of the Church of England are due to *him* for his seasonable, learned, and judicious writings in her defence;" and therefore, that you should urge him, to "occupy the department he is so thoroughly qualified to fill, and go on, frustrating the attempts of your adversaries,

* See *Appendix*, No. IX.

† "Discourse on Education, and on the Plans pursued in Charity Schools," 1786.

‡ P. 3. (*P.*) Probably in the *Advertisement*. See *supra*, p. 323, *Note* ‡.

§ *Sermons*, p. 22. (*P.*) *Works*, VI. p. 80.

to deprive *you* of the argument from tradition."* I am only concerned that, in this, you seem to give up that important province to him, when, in my opinion, it would be much better occupied by yourself.

I do not know, however, how it is, but after the great exertions of this boastful champion of yours, (whom all your encomiums and encouragement will not, I fear, be able to bring into the field again,) your church seems more solicitous than ever to procure more help, and from other quarters. Your own *sermon*, the object of which is to exhort your friends to *contend earnestly for the faith*,† is a proof of this; and from many other publications, as well as the language that, as I am informed, is frequently held from many pulpits in different parts of the kingdom ;‡ it should seem that, notwithstanding all that had been done by Dr. Horsley, the faith of the church, and consequently the church itself, is still *in danger*. Is all this *to slay the slain?* The least that can be inferred from your sermon is, that the controversy is hardly well begun, and by no means that it is ended; and from your engaging in it,§ I flatter myself that it will be conducted in a manner infinitely more pleasing, both to myself, and the public, as well as more satisfactory with respect to the object of it, than it is probable that it would have been, if it had continued in the hands of Dr. Horsley.

I am, with real esteem,
Rev. Sir,
Your very humble servant,
J. PRIESTLEY.

* *Sermons*, p. 15. (*P.*) *Works*, VI. p. 73, *Note*. † See *supra*, p. 322, *Note* *.

‡ I have heard that Mr. Prettyman, brother to Dr. Prettyman, secretary to Mr. Pitt, and now Bishop of Lincoln, preached a very virulent sermon, in which my name was mentioned, before the corporation of Norwich. I hope he is so much a man of honour, as to publish the sermon, and thereby give me an opportunity of knowing, *from himself*, what he really *did* say of me, that, if it appear to me to be necessary, I may vindicate myself. (*P.*)

In an N. B. to the *Preface*, 1787, Dr. Priestley says, "I am just informed that it was not Mr. Prettyman, but Dr. Prettyman himself, the present Bishop of Lincoln, who preached the *Sermon*. I should be sorry to fix a charge of illiberality on any wrong person; and I shall now with more confidence expect, from the high rank of his Lordship, that he will do me the justice I require."

In some copies of the *Preface*, dated Feb. 1, 1788, Dr P. adds, "A year is nearly elapsed since this preface was written, but nothing has yet come from the Bishop upon the subject."

§ "The last literary work which Dr. Horne proposed to execute, while Dean of Canterbury, was a formal Defence of the Divinity of Christ against the objections of Dr. Priestley; in which it was his intention to shew, how that writer had mistaken and perverted the Scripture and the Liturgy." Jones's "Life of Dr. Horne," *Works*, I. p. 145. This design was never accomplished. The biographer says, "How much had been collected for this purpose, I do not find: yet I know that the subject had been long and often in the mind of Dr. Horne." Mr. Jones, however, like a good churchman, satisfies himself that, "in the eyes of all reasonable men, the Church of England could want but little defence, &c." *Ibid.* p. 149.

LETTER II.

Of the Argument from Antiquity, and of Dr. Horsley's Services with respect to it.

Rev. Sir,

It is evident from your exhortations to Dr. Horsley, and the whole tenor of your discourse, that, notwithstanding the stress you very justly lay upon the doctrine of the *Scriptures*, you do not undervalue the opinion of the *primitive church*. You say, "If the doctrine of our Lord's divinity be not the doctrine of the Scriptures, and of the primitive church" (as if these must have been the same) "it matters not *how*, *when*, or *by whom*, it was afterwards introduced. It should not have been received, and ought not to be retained."*

If, therefore, it can be proved by independent evidence, that the great body of primitive Christians were Unitarians, *one* of the strong holds of your faith is removed, and the other must be in great danger. For you could hardly have expressed yourself in the manner you have done, in the above quotation, if you had not thought some regard due to the sense in which the primitive Christians understood those books of scripture, which were written more immediately for their use, and in a language with which they were perfectly acquainted; regard enough to render us doubtful of the different interpretations which may be given at so great a distance of time as the present, and under the influence of such a mass of prejudices as may be supposed to have been contracted in the course of seventeen hundred years.

It cannot be doubted, but that the primitive Christians really thought that their opinions, whatever they were, were contained in the Scriptures, as these were the standard to which they constantly appealed. When you say, therefore, of what I have written, as you choose to express it, "in four large volumes, concerning the Jews, and the Gnostics, and the Ebionites, and the Nazarenes; concerning Plato, and Philo, and Justin Martyr, and Tertullian; concerning Philosophers, Fathers and Heretics, many and diverse, but all Unitarians;† concerning the supposed caution of the apos-

* P. 31. *(P.)* Probably in the *Advertisement*. See *supra*, p. 323, *Note* ‡.

† There is rather too much of rhetoric in this passage to be strictly true. I am far from supposing that *Justin Martyr*, *Tertullian*, and many others of the Fathers, were *Unitarians*. I have shewn that they were Trinitarians, but not such as the Dean

tles, and the supposed metaphysical and injudicious arguments and disquisitions of writers, whether ancient or modern, upon any part of the subject; that all this, with the goodly edifice raised on such a foundation, will fall directly to pieces, vanish into air; 'and, like the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a wreck behind;'"* your conclusion is rather too hasty.

If, Sir, what I have advanced in those four volumes be just; if, from the various evidence that I have produced, it be indisputable, as I think it is, that the primitive Christian church was *Unitarian;* if all the explanations and defences of the doctrine of the Trinity, by those who first broached it, and by those who have since maintained it, be absurd, and no better explanations or defences can be produced, the doctrine itself cannot be true; and no criticism upon any texts of scripture, if they can possibly bear an Unitarian interpretation, can prove it to be so.

As you strongly recommend the study of ecclesiastical history, and that of the fathers, I presume that, though you wish Dr. Horsley to occupy this department in the present discussion, you have not neglected to give due attention to it yourself. Indeed, your deciding so peremptorily as you do, on Dr. Horsley's superiority to me in that respect, shews that you think yourself qualified to judge between us. Permit me, then, to request, that you would state a little more particularly, what the services of Dr. Horsley in this province, which you commend so much, have really been. For I cannot suppose that you would have given so general and decided a judgment on the whole of the argument, without having examined all the particulars of which that whole consists.

As a lover of truth, then, and a candid scholar, please, whenever you publish your *large work*, to answer the following questions *seriatim:*

1. Has Dr. Horsley proved, that those who are called *Ebionites*, or *Nazarenes*, had no existence in the age of the apostles, and that the latter had their name from *Nazareth*, on their retiring to that place after the destruction of Jerusalem by *Adrian?* Has he even proved that any of them were ever settled there at all?

of Canterbury would call so now, as they did not believe the perfect equality of all the three persons, but uniformly held the inferiority of the Son to the Father, which Dr. Horsley must also do, as he maintains, that the Father is the *fountain of deity*, and has some unknown pre-eminence over the Son. (*P.*)

* P. 31. (*P.*) Probably in the *Advertisement.* See *supra*, p. 323, *Note* ‡.

2. Has he proved, as he undertook to do, that the *Nazarenes*, or Jerome's *Hebrews believing in Christ*, were orthodox with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity ?*

3. Has he, after eighteen months' re-consideration of the subject, and correcting his former opinion, proved that there were, in reality, *five* sects of Jewish Christians,† though *Origen* and *Eusebius* expressly make them to be no more than *two*, some of them admitting, and others denying the miraculous conception ; but all of them disbelieving the divinity of Christ, and adhering to the law of Moses ? If this is to be received as authentic history, let us have, at least, the authority of the Dean of Canterbury for it, as well as that of the Archdeacon of St. Alban's.

4. Has he proved that *Origen*, who expressly asserts that no Jewish Christians believed the divinity of Christ, was, in that or in any other respect, a *wilful liar ;* and, therefore, not to be credited in any thing,—an article which he has laboured so much in his last publication ?

5. Has he proved that there was a church of orthodox Jewish Christians at *Jerusalem*, after the time of *Adrian?*—another article on which he has bestowed much pains in his last piece.

6. Has he invalidated any thing that I have advanced to prove that *Athanasius*, and others of the fathers, represented the apostles as having been obliged to use great caution in teaching the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and that of the Trinity, lest it should shock the prejudices of the first converts in favour of the doctrines of the unity of God and the humanity of Christ ?

7. Has he proved that the Jews in our Saviour's time were believers in the doctrine of the Trinity, that they expected the second person of it in the character of their *Messiah;* and, consequently, that the apostles considered Christ as God from the time that they considered him as the *Messiah ?*

8. Has he proved that the *Unitarians* were considered as *heretics*, in early times ?

9. Has he proved that prayers for succour in external persecution are properly addressed to Christ ?

10. Has he proved that by the *generation of the Son*, all

* Since I wrote my Reply to Dr. Horsley's *Remarks*, [*supra*, p. 293,] I observe, that Dr. Lardner understood the passage in *Jerome* exactly as I did, taking it for granted, that by *Nazarenus*, he meant the same people whom he called *Hebrews believing in Christ*. See his *Testimonies*, I. p. 19. *(P.)* *Works*, VII. p. 22.

† Dr. Horsley's *Remarks*, p. 60. *(P.)* See *supra*, p. 294.

the fathers meant a *display of his powers*, and not his assuming a *proper personality*, from having been a mere attribute of the Father?

11. Has he proved that there is no difference between the doctrine of the personification of the *Logos*, and the peculiar opinions of the *Arians;* than which I have asserted that no schemes were ever more directly opposed to each other?

12. Has he proved the antiquity of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ from the writings of *Barnabas* and *Ignatius?*

13. Has he proved the origin of the Son, the second person in the Trinity, from the Father's contemplating his own perfections? An opinion, I believe, peculiar to himself, unsupported by any authority, ancient or modern. I think I perceive that, with respect to this curious particular, he has not given *you* entire satisfaction; since, with respect to *all* schemes to explain the doctrine of the *Trinity*, you say, they leave us "just where we were, totally in the dark."* Indeed, I do not wonder that a notion so super-eminently absurd, so void of all foundation in the Scriptures, in common sense, or primitive antiquity, should not recommend itself to those who do not wish to expose the doctrine of the Trinity as absolutely ridiculous.

Indeed, Sir, to undertake the defence of your applauded champion on these articles, (and I might have extended the list to many more,) is an Herculean attempt. Greatly must the execution of it swell the work you have in hand, and well may you crave indulgence, as to the article of *time*.† I think it must appear to all impartial readers, that Dr. Horsley has been completely foiled in his attempts to prove any one of the above-mentioned particulars, and every other that is of any importance to the real merits of the question between us. And if this be the case, what signifies the great superiority of his *learning?* Nay, if all his superior ability and learning has not enabled him to prove what he so earnestly contended for, does it not afford an argument, that neither learning nor ability can be of any avail in the cause that he has espoused?

Utterly unable to make any plausible defence of himself

* *Sermons*, p. 42. (*P.*) *Works*, p. 92, *Note.*

† P. 32. (*P.*) "'Indulgence,' said he, 'is requested as to the article of *time*. I cannot write so *fast* as Dr. Priestley does.'" *Jones* in *Works*, I. pp. 146, 147. After all, "the design of writing against Priestley was not prosecuted with vigour." *Ibid.* p. 149. See *supra*, p. 325, *Note* ||.

in *other* articles, after waiting eighteen months, with an air of insolence peculiar to himself, (which you, Sir, tacitly condemn, by recommending a mode of conducting controversy the very reverse of his,) he challenged me again with respect to *the veracity of Origen*, and the existence of a church of orthodox Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, after the time of *Adrian*. But in my Reply, which was immediate, I have shewn that, instead of relieving himself, he has involved himself in much greater confusion and difficulty than ever; having grossly misunderstood every one of the five passages from the fathers which he produced in his defence. In this Reply of mine, which has been published about six months, I call upon him to defend himself and his argument in such a manner as, I believe, there is no example of any person being called upon (except Mr. White, of Oxford, by myself).* In the conclusion I say, "On this article, at least, an article deliberately selected by yourself, let the controversy between us come to a fair issue. Nothing has been, or shall be wanting on my part; and, therefore, the public will certainly expect your explicit and speedy answer."†

What, Sir, can you think of a man who can sit down contented without making any reply to such a call as this? Had any person called upon *me* in this manner, he would have had my Reply (either vindicating myself, or acknowledging my inability to do it) in a week, or as soon as it had been physically possible for it to be dispatched.

When you speak of the great *learning* of Dr. Horsley, it is to be supposed that you speak of so much of it as is *before the world;* and we have not yet seen enough to justify your very high encomiums. If the world should happen to think less highly of it than you do, they may say that the thanks of the Church of England were very lightly bestowed.

To confine ourselves to this controversy, (and you do not profess to look any farther,) will you say that you infer his superior learning from his translating ἰδιωτης by the English word *idiot;* § from his arguing from the pronoun οὑτος, as ne-

* See *Appendix*, No. XII. † See *supra*, p. 277.

§ If any authority could be wanting in support of my interpretation of the word ἰδιωτης, I might quote that of the famous *Bentley*, whose learning will hardly be called in question by Dr. Horsley himself. In his *Remarks* on a work entitled *A Discourse on Free-thinking*, (p. 118,) he expresses himself in the following manner, with respect to that very translation of this word, which Dr. Horsley adopted, and Mr. Badcock defends:

"Ab *idiotis evangelistis*, by *idiot evangelists*, says our author; who, if he is

cessarily referring to *a person;** from his saying that ουκ αλλῳ τινι η cannot be rendered *by nothing but;* from his taking the part with Mr. Badcock, in rendering αλλοι γαρ κατ' αλλον τροπον, *others on another plan*, or from his construction of Jerome's *quid dicam?* These are almost all the specimens that he has exhibited of his profound acquaintance with the learned languages, in the course of this controversy; and, in the opinion of many, who are not without pretensions to scholarship, it will not be to the credit of the Dean of Canterbury to praise any man so very highly on these accounts.

There are many also who do not think so highly as you do of Dr. Horsley's merit with respect to the Church of England, or the doctrine of the Trinity, as one of its articles. And there are, I believe, at this moment, many *Unitarians*, who think themselves under greater obligations to him, than any *Trinitarians* whatever. For to him has been owing, in a great measure, the present discussion of the subject, which must now proceed till the great question be decided; and with respect to the final issue, judging from his acknowledged ability to defend the doctrine of the Trinity, as far as it is defensible, they entertain no doubt at all; being confident that scripture, reason, and antiquity, will be found equally in their favour.

It is the earnest wish of all *Unitarians*, and of none more than myself, that your high encomiums may bring your champion into the field again. I have done every thing in my power, and in my way, to second your wishes. But as he took eighteen months to make his last reply, he may be like a comet whose periodical revolution is that period of time, and if so, it will be in vain that we endeavour to accelerate the course of nature.

As you are so lavish in your praise of *one* of your champions, I wonder you should overlook the merit of others, such as Mr. Burgh,† who had the title of LL.D. conferred

sincere in this version, proves himself a very *idiot* in the Greek and Latin acceptation of that word. Ιδιωτης, *idiota; illiteratus, indoctus, rudis.* See *Du Fresne* in his Glossaries, who takes notice, that *idiota*, for an *idiot*, or *natural fool*, is peculiar to your *English* law, for which he cites *Rastal.* Did *Victor*, therefore, mean *idiot evangelists* in your *English* sense? No, but *illiterate, unlearned.* What, then, must we think of our author, for his scandalous translation here? Whether imputation will he choose to lie under, that he knew the meaning of *Victor*, or that he knew it not?" Dr. Horsley must suppose the same question put to himself. (*P.*) *Remarks* (xxxiii.), ed. 8, 1743, p. 113.

* See *supra*, p. 51.

† "A member of the Irish Parliament, residing in the city of York." Lindsey's *Sequel*, 1776, p. vi.

upon him at Oxford, for his answer to Mr. Lindsey;* Mr. White, who has stepped into the arena with *looks* of stouter defiance than any of you, though his *deeds* do not seem to correspond to them; and Mr. Howes, who has undertaken the most difficult department in the whole discussion, viz. to prove that the *Jews* were always *Trinitarians*, (which is the counterpart of Molière's *Médecin malgré lui,*) and that there were no *Unitarians* at all till about the Council of *Nice*. Time will shew how ingeniously he will maintain such paradoxes as these.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

Of the Interference of Civil Power in Matters of Religion.

Rev. Sir,

There is one article of considerable importance on which you have touched in these *Sermons* of yours, with respect to which you seem to be under a mistake yourself, and will probably mislead others. I wish, therefore, to set you right before the publication of your larger work.†

You more than hint, that the consequence of the general prevalence of *Unitarianism*, will be the exclusion of *Trinitarians* from the church. You even suggest, that it is our wish and intention to apply external force, in order to bring this about, whenever we shall think the times sufficiently ripe for such a measure. "A zealous Anti-trinitarian," you say, "may fancy that those idolatrous churches and kingdoms require to be quickened in their progress towards destruction. He may conceive himself in duty bound to become an instrument in executing the vengeance of heaven upon them, for refusing to admit an Arian or Socinian reformation, tendered in a milder way."‡

With respect to this insinuation, I can only say, that nothing has yet been advanced by any *Unitarian* that can give the least colour to it. It is not consistent with your usual candour, and what no appearances whatever have

* Entitled "A Scriptural Confutation of the Arguments against the *one Godhead of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, produced by the Rev. Mr. Lindsey, in his late Apology." See *Sequel*, pp. vi.—xii. Dr. Burgh published, in 1778, "An Inquiry into the Belief of the Christians of the first three Centuries, respecting the one Godhead of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." See *Mon. Rev.* LXI. pp. 366—369.

† See *supra*, p. 325, *Note* ||. ‡ *Sermons*, p. 10. (*P.*) *Works*, VI. p. 69.

made at all probable. Indeed, Sir, we see no occasion to have recourse to an *arm of flesh*, in this contest. We have a certain prospect of victory by the mere force of *argument*, and without any risk whatever. I can appeal to the uniform tenor of all my writings, and especially my *Address to Protestant Dissenters as such*,* if I have not always inculcated the most peaceable methods of promoting reformation, and have not even gone farther to recommend the patient suffering of wrong than most other writers.

I must produce another passage from your Sermons, relating to the intolerance of Unitarians. "Let us only suppose," you say, "that the direction of ecclesiastical matters in this kingdom, should pass into the hands of those persons who regard the doctrine of the Trinity as involving in it an absurdity equal to that of Transubstantiation, and as being the grand obstacle to the conversion of Jews, Mahometans, and Deists; who deem the worship of Christ to be gross idolatry, and high treason against the majesty of the one supreme God; must not the new Unitarian church, with its confession and services, be so constituted, as utterly, and for ever, to exclude us from becoming members of it? Most undoubtedly, and of necessity it must. 'An Unitarian people,' we are told, 'will not long be satisfied with a Trinitarian establishment.' Indeed I suppose they will not. They will endeavour to overturn it, and it is our business to prevent them from so doing."†

Now, Sir, had you given more attention to the nature of the case, you could never have apprehended any danger to yourself, or to any *Trinitarians*, from an *Unitarian* liturgy, because it would contain nothing offensive to you, nothing in which you could not heartily join; whereas, we are absolutely excluded from joining in your worship, by your Trinitarian forms. While you acknowledge *one God* (which you always profess to do,) you may surely address your prayers to that one God, calling him, as you are authorized to do in the Scriptures, *the Maker of heaven and earth; the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; the one true God*, as our Saviour calls him; the great being who *sent him*, who *raised him from the dead*, and who *gave him glory*. For it is to this God that all *Unitarians* pray; and to a being of this description you *Trinitarians* may also pray, so long as you can accommodate to your notions this scripture language, and suppose Jesus Christ himself, and the Holy

* "By a Dissenter." 1769. See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 97.
† *Sermons*, p. 4. (*P.*) *Works*, VI. pp. 63, 64.

Spirit, to be in any manner included in this definition, or description, of *the one true God.* This is a mental process of your own, with which yourselves only are concerned, and in which we have nothing to do. If you can, by any means, accommodate such language as that above-mentioned to your peculiar sentiments, in reading the Scriptures, in which it perpetually occurs, you may do the same in our forms of worship.

We can now join in using the *Lord's Prayer*, and in almost all the service of the church of England, except the *Litany;* so that there is very little that is offensive to an *Unitarian* in the whole of your afternoon service. Remove, therefore, only your subscriptions to articles of faith, and reform your morning service after the model of that in the afternoon, and I believe you will remove the greatest of our objections. We are not, I assure you, so fond of *schism* as to stand out for trifles; but do not compel, or tempt us, to pay supreme worship to a fellow-creature, to a man like ourselves; who, though highly honoured by God for his virtue and obedience, was so far from considering himself *as God*, that, with the most genuine humility, he always ascribed every thing that he said or did to his Father that sent him, and worshipped him with the same deep reverence that he inculcated upon all his followers.

If, Sir, you would, without prejudice, look into Mr. Lindsey's *Reformed Liturgy*, you would soon be satisfied, that there is nothing in it but what you yourself could join in, with much devotion and advantage. Read, if you please, my own *Forms* of devotion *for Unitarian Societies*, and I am confident you will find nothing in them offensive to yourself, except the prayer for *Easter Sunday;* and to accommodate you, and other Trinitarians, I shall have no objection to the omission of it. I will go much farther than *you* are disposed to do, for the sake of a peaceable accommodation.

But I do not expect or hope for any thing of an intermediate kind. Your system is so complex, and involves such an unnatural connexion of things ecclesiastical with things civil, that though you might know where to begin a reformation, you will never be able to agree among yourselves where to stop. It must, therefore, be done in a manner in which the leading persons in the church and state will not be the primary agents. When this will be effected, or by whom, I do not pretend to form any conjecture. This is not my business, but a much easier and

plainer task, viz. to investigate and to propagate that *truth* which in God's own way, and his own time, cannot fail to bring about all that I wish; when a pure *Unitarian worship* will be universally adopted, and with universal consent. In the mean time, do not you and your brethren *fear where no fear is*, or alarm others with apprehensions of our intolerance, which, if you seriously reflect, you cannot really entertain yourselves.

I the less wonder at your not readily supposing that *we* would content ourselves with the mere force of truth, when I see that, notwithstanding your profession of universal toleration, you cannot help intimating, that you think there is some reason for that *alliance of church and state*, of which, as Christians, you ought to be ashamed. In these very *Sermons* you more than insinuate the *propriety*, if not the *policy*, of penal laws in matters of religion; when you say, concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, that "it requires and demands the support of every state wishing to enjoy the favour and protection of that God, who for such gracious purposes hath revealed it."* For how is a state, as such, to *support* any particular doctrine, but by civil rewards and punishments? The civil power has no other method of supporting any thing. These are its proper arms, which alone it can employ to effect all its purposes. The doctrine of Transubstantiation is supported in the same manner. Like the doctrine of the Trinity, *it requires and demands* such support. Happily, *Unitarianism* neither requires nor demands it, any more than Christianity itself did for the space of three hundred years. Nay, they both are able to make their way in spite of all the opposition that your present supporters and protectors, the powers of this world, can give to them.

I should think, Sir, that a man of your good sense could not but see that any mode of religion is in a very unnatural and awkward predicament, which *requires* and *demands* any *civil support*, because it throws itself under the protection, and is, of course, at the mercy of a power which may equally promote truth or falsehood, Christianity, Mahometanism, or Paganism. For if the civil power, as such, has a right to establish any one mode of religion, it must have the same right to establish any other. If this great business be left to the discretion of our civil governors, it must also be left to their indiscretion. And what judges

* *Sermons*, p. 47. (*P.*) *Works*, VI. p. 97.

can you suppose such persons as constitute our two Houses of Parliament to be of these matters? Yet I am willing to think they may be as able theologians as those who have the ordering of these things in other countries.

Would you trust the Members of our Parliament with the choice of your physician, or allow them to prescribe the mode of treatment of you, if your life was in danger; or would you think of appealing to them with respect to the truth of a theory in philosophy? And yet I think them as likely to decide justly in a case of *medicine* or *philosophy*, as with respect to *religion*.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

Of some particular Arguments for the Doctrine of the Trinity.

Rev. Sir,

I wish not to enter into the discussion of any particular arguments for the doctrine of the Trinity at this time, reserving myself till the publication of your *large work;* and for the execution of this I am willing to give you as much *time* as you request,* since you say you wish (and in this I sincerely join you) "to execute the work with care and attention;" as we shall then, I doubt not, see all that *can* be urged in support of your opinions. But there are a few things that it may not be improper to apprize you of beforehand; and you may take or neglect the hints I shall give, as you shall see reason.

You say, "All disputation concerning the manner of the distinction, the manner of the union, the manner of the generation, and the manner of the procession, is needless and fruitless. Needless, because, if we have divine authority for the fact, it sufficeth. That is all we are concerned to know. Fruitless, because it is a disputation without ideas. After a long, tedious, intricate, and perplexed controversy, we find ourselves—just where we were—totally in the dark. Such has been the case respecting this, and other questions. God is pleased to reveal the fact; man insists upon apprehending the mode. In his present state he cannot apprehend it. He, therefore, denies the fact, and commences unbeliever."†

Now, Sir, you must know, that all this that you say

* P. 32. (*P.*) See *supra*, p. 329.

† *Sermons*, p. 42, *Note.* (*P.*) *Works*, VI. p. 92.

respecting the doctrine of the *Trinity* is continually said by the Catholics, in defence of the doctrine of *Transubstantiation*. As a Protestant, you yourself must allege, that every real *fact* has some *mode* or *manner* of being what it is, and every true proposition must be understood in some sense or other; and therefore, that if every conceivable mode or manner of a fact imply an impossibility, and every sense of a proposition imply an absurdity, the doctrine itself is untrue, and therefore that it cannot be taught in the Scriptures, if they teach nothing but truth. You, consequently, explain those passages of Scripture which are urged in support of the doctrine of Transubstantiation, in a manner different from the Catholics, who hold that doctrine; and if the literal sense will not answer your purpose, you very properly and sensibly have recourse to a figurative one, which is all that we are charged with doing, with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity.

We say that every possible definition of that doctrine implies an absurdity; and that the *fact* of the *Trinity in Unity* must exist in some manner or other, but that every conceivable mode or manner implies an impossibility, and therefore the existence of the thing itself must be impossible also; and consequently, that if it was necessary to interpret a few texts which you think teach that doctrine, in the same or a similar manner, to that which you use with respect to those that are supposed to teach the doctrine of Transubstantiation, we should be authorized to do it.

We do not wonder that sensible *Trinitarians* are averse to all discussion of the *mode* of subsistence of *three persons in one undivided essence;* because they have found that every attempt to define this subject has only tended to expose it to ridicule; but, notwithstanding this, no Trinitarian who imagines that he *can* explain this mysterious doctrine, ever fails to propose his explanation, knowing the great advantage it would be to his argument, if he could hit upon any thing of this kind that would be unexceptionable. Witness the incredible number of illustrations of this doctrine among the ancients, and also among the moderns, and especially the last most curious one of Dr. Horsley; *though last not least.* Nay, in boldness of thought, he has gone beyond any of his predecessors, maintaining that the production of the Son was the necessary consequence of the Father's contemplating his own perfections. *Athanasius* himself would have stood amazed at the sublimity of the idea. Could you yourself, Sir, imagine that *you* had hit upon any new and happy mode

of illustrating this doctrine, you would, I doubt not, think it no inconsiderable advantage to your argument. And who can tell what may be the result of the close attention that you propose to give to your great work,* in all the *time* that you may think proper to bestow upon it?

You say, that "the authority of all the three *is* the same, their power equal, their persons undivided, and their glory one."† But if you do not use words without ideas, and which convey no more meaning than *Datisi*, *Bocardo*, *Ferison*, in logic, you must have some notion in your own mind in what *sense* the proposition to which you give your assent *may be true;* for otherwise you must think that it *may* be false; so that disquisitions concerning the *mode* or *manner* which you reprobate so strongly, are absolutely unavoidable, for the satisfaction of your own mind.

All particular propositions are reducible to abstract ones, and those abstract ones are predicable of other particulars. Now, if it be true that *three divine persons* may make only *one God*, it must be true in general, that *three* may be *one*, and also *in the same sense*, if each of the divine persons want nothing to make them *perfect God*. But is this abstract proposition true of any thing else?

This reasoning all Protestants urge against the doctrine of *Transubstantiation*. For if it be true, that the sacramental *bread* may take the substance of *flesh*, and yet retain every property of bread, the substance of *other* things may also be changed, while the properties remain unchanged; but if no such change can be made to appear probable, in any other instance, you justly reject the supposition universally. In the same manner, I will undertake to shew that, on whatever principles you can defend the doctrine of the *Trinity*, I can, *mutatis mutandis*, defend that of *Transubstantiation*. Take your own choice of arguments from reason, or from the Scriptures.

With respect to several of your arguments from *the Scriptures*, (on which, as you reject all arguments from *reason*, you justly lay so much stress,) instead of giving us the plain words of Scripture, you give your own arbitrary construction of it.

"By the being baptized in the name of God," you say, "can be meant no less than entering into covenant with a person, as God; professing faith in him as such; enlisting one's self into his service; and vowing all obedience and

* See *supra*, p. 325, *Note*. † *Sermons*, p. 37. (*P.*) *Works*, VI. p. 87.

submission to him. Such is the natural, the obvious import of this rite, by which we are admitted into the church of Christ, this solemn form of baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, that is, into the faith, service, and worship of the Holy Trinity. For let us reflect a little. The nations were to be baptized in the name of three persons, in the same manner, and therefore surely in the same sense, as in the name of one. Whatever honour, reverence, or regard, is paid to the Father in this solemn rite, the same we cannot but suppose paid to all three. Is he acknowledged as the object of worship? So are the other two persons likewise. Is he God and Lord over us? So are they. Are we his servants, subjects, and soldiers, enrolled under him? So are we equally under all," &c. &c.* You also say, that baptizing in the name of " the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,—is declaring the sacred three to be the one God," and that " no man who had been baptized according to this form, could be ignorant of the doctrine."†

Now all this, as I have said, is not *scripture*, but your own arbitrary *construction* of scripture. Where do you find it laid down as a maxim, that baptizing into the name of any person is acknowledging that person for God? And how does *baptizing* in the name of three persons imply their equality, any more than doing any thing else that respects them all? May not three persons, of very different ranks, be with propriety named together? Do we not read, 1 *Chron.* xxix. 20, that the people of Israel " bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord and the king"?‡ By an argument therefore exactly, and in all its forms, similar to yours, it may be proved that *God* and *the king*, being equally objects of worship, must be equal. Was not the *action* of bowing down, and the *manner* of performing it, the same respecting both? Must it not, then, have been done in the same *sense?*

That the phrase *being baptized unto a person*, or *in the name* of a person, which must be the same thing, does not imply that the person in whose name the baptism is made is God, may be clearly inferred from *Paul's* saying, 1 *Cor.* x. 2, that the Israelites " were all baptized unto Moses," (not *by* Moses,) " in the cloud and in the sea." He meant into the religion that was published by Moses. Conse-

* *Sermons*, p. 34. (*P.*) *Works*, VI. pp. 85, 86.
† *Sermons*, p. 3, *Note.* (*P.*) *Works*, VI. p. 62.
‡ See Vol. XI. pp. 498, 499.

quently, being baptized *unto Christ*, or *in the name of Christ*, only means into the profession of the religion which was published by Christ.* This must be our inference, if it be allowed that the Scriptures are their own best interpreters, the same phrases being generally used in the same sense. The *holy spirit* is used because, according to the phraseology of scripture, the gospel was confirmed, or proved to be of God, by the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Had there been so much solemn and mysterious meaning implied in the phrase of *baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit*, as you suppose; had it been intended as a standing assertion of the doctrine of a *Trinity* in the Divine nature, it might have been expected, both that there would have been some express declaration that this *was* the intent of it, and also that those words should always have been used when the office was performed; but no such declaration of the meaning of the phrase is to be found in the Scriptures; and it is remarkable, that all the baptisms we read of in the *New Testament*, are baptisms *in the name of Christ* only. Must we say that this was another instance of the *caution* with which the apostles taught the doctrine of the Trinity?

You say, that "the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," are "three persons in one God," is a truth "proposed to us as the ground of our hope, our comfort, and our joy; as the principle on which the conduct of life is to be framed, accepted, and rewarded."† But surely, Sir, these assertions are most extravagant, and unauthorized. Admitting this doctrine of the *Trinity* to be true, where do you find one text in which it is proposed to us in any of these lights, "as the ground of our hope, our comfort, or our joy; as the principle on which our conduct is to be framed, accepted, and rewarded"?

Indeed, I do not think it possible to conceive how such a doctrine as this can answer any of those purposes. What ideas you annex to the terms *framing one's conduct upon the doctrine of the Trinity*, I cannot imagine. How the doctrine of a future life, or that of the Divine placability, are principles on which the conduct of life is to be formed, I clearly understand; because the belief of them is of great use as a motive to good conduct; but how to make any such practical use of the doctrine of the *Trinity*, I no more perceive, than I do that its sister doctrine of *Transubstantiation* should be a practical one.

* See Vol. XIV. pp. 90, 91. † *Sermons*, p. 2. *(P.)* *Works*, VI. p. 61.

You say, "Upon the very best authority we are informed that Christ was 'the lamb slain from the foundation of the world,' that is, (for it cannot be otherwise understood,) slain in effect, in the Divine purpose and counsel. It is likewise said, that 'grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.' The words intimate that, previous to the creation of the world, something had passed in our favour above; that the plan of our future redemption was then laid; that some agreement, some covenant, relative to it, had been entered into: 'grace was given us,' not in our proper persons, for as yet we were not, we had no being; but in the person of him who was afterwards to become our representative, our Saviour, 'in Christ Jesus.' Now the plan must have been laid, the covenant entered into, by the parties who have since been graciously pleased to concern themselves in its execution. Who these are, we cannot be ignorant. It was the Son of God, who took our nature upon him, and in that nature made a full and sufficient oblation, satisfaction, and atonement for the sins of the world. It was the Father who accepted such oblation, satisfaction, and atonement; and in consequence forgave those sins. It was the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and the Son, through the preaching of the word, and the administration of the sacraments, by his enlightening, healing, and comforting grace, to apply to the hearts of men, for all the purposes of pardon, sanctification, and salvation, the merits and benefits of that oblation, satisfaction, and atonement."*

This is a most remarkable example of drawing many and great conclusions from small premises; indeed, from no premises at all. By *grace given us in Christ Jesus before the world began*, can be understood nothing more, according to your own mode of interpretation, than that it was in the original counsel of God, that we should be favoured with the blessings of the gospel; which no more implies that *Christ* pre-existed, than that *we* ourselves did. Besides, no mention is here made of the Holy Spirit, and still less of any *covenant* being made between the three, of the Son proposing, the Father accepting, and the Spirit applying. This is not *interpreting*, but absolutely *making* Scripture. Where do you read of any such covenant as this but in Milton's *Paradise Lost?*†

* *Sermons*, p. 43. (*P.*) *Works*, VI. pp. 93, 94.

† B. iii. 80—343, where, according to *Pope's* just censure, *God the Father turns a school divine.* In his description of this covenant, *Milton* appears to have abandoned his earlier belief in a *Trinity;* no part whatever being here assigned to a *third Person*, while the representations of the *Son*, accord, exactly, with the theory which has been denominated *high Arianism.*

Really, Sir, the Scriptures, in the plainest of all language, teach a doctrine the very reverse of what you here lay down, viz. that God, even the Father, seeing the deplorable condition of mankind, of his own motion, sent first the prophets, and then that "prophet mighty in deed and word," (*Luke* xxiv. 19,) his own son, to save them; and confirmed his mission by those miracles which are called *the gifts of his spirit*, or the same divine power that appeared in Christ; who says that *the words which he spake were not his own*, and that *the Father within him did the works.* Reconcile this language with your doctrine of the perfect equality of the Son to the Father, if you can.

I could, in like manner, easily go over your other arguments from Scripture, and shew that all the foundations of this great article of your faith are equally weak. They are indeed, most apparently so. You cannot wonder, then, that *Unitarians* should write with confidence, when they have nothing but such arguments to answer.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

Miscellaneous Articles, and Conclusion.

Rev. Sir,

All the friends of ecclesiastical establishments insist upon the right of the civil magistrate to use his own best judgment, in choosing the religion that shall be supported at the expense of the state, especially if the majority of the people should be of the same opinion with him. In *Ireland*, no regard is paid to this latter circumstance. For there the members of the established church, which takes the tithes of the whole kingdom, are, I believe, computed at little more than one tenth of the people. This, in my opinion, is the most bare-faced tyranny.* You, however, have mentioned one circumstance, which may serve to shew how little stress you can sometimes lay on the sentiments either of the civil governors, or the majority of the people. For you say, "Athanasius once stood single against the world,

* Thus it is described in a military Memoir of the late *Mahratta War*, which I have lately seen in MS. The author, Lieut.-Colonel Blacker (B. ii. Ch. ix,) commending "The British Conquerors of India" for "the support and confirmation of their Priesthood and Church endowments," to "the original Hindoo population," contrasts this policy "with the state of the immense population of Irish Catholics, who are obliged to pay two Establishments of Clergy: oppression," he indignantly adds, "almost inconceivable to distant observers!!"

and prevailed."* His opinion, therefore, was not, by your own confession, either that of the generality of the people, or that of the governing powers. You therefore must think that, a very small minority may be in the right, and finally prevail against *numbers* and *power* combined. In the time of *Constantius*, you must acknowledge that *Arianism*, or Unitarianism, was the general opinion.† And by what means was it that *Athanasianism* became prevalent? Can you reflect upon the history of those times, and think that it would ever have become so, if it had not been for the support it afterwards had from the governing powers? It has the same support at this day. But even this will not be able to preserve it much longer. You see how it loses ground in *America*, since it has lost the countenance of government there.‡

2. You say "I do not see my Saviour only in 'a few detached passages' of either Testament. I see him conducting the economy of the divine dispensations, through both, from the creation to the consummation of all things, as the יהוה the מלאך יהוה, and ὁ λογος τȣ Θεȣ. Dr. Allix and Mr. Taylor have both demonstrated this point. It is only to be wished the latter had drawn the conclusion drawn by the former, the just and proper conclusion, that the person spoken of must indeed be VERY GOD."§

Upon this subject, Sir, I would earnestly recommend to you, what I dare say, you have never yet perused, viz. the account which the learned *Basnage* (in his truly excellent *History of the Jews)* has given of their sentiments with respect to the *Messiah*,‖ and Mr. Lindsey's reply to Mr. Taylor,¶ in the *Sequel to his Apology*.** This, I think, it is barely possible to read, without being convinced that there is no weight whatever in any thing that is alleged by Mr. Taylor. You consider it as the clearest of all truths, that Christ was the person by whom God spake to Moses and the prophets. But indeed, Sir, this notion is directly contrary to what is asserted in the first and second verses of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, in which we read, "God who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto

* *Sermons*, p. 14. (*P.*) *Works*, VI. p. 72.

† See Vol. VIII. p. 371.

‡ See Mr. Belsham's *Mem. of Lindsey*, 1812, pp. 238—280.

§ *Sermons*, p. 40, *Note*. (*P.*) *Works*, VI. p. 91.

‖ See *supra*, pp. 223, 224.

¶ Author of "The Apology of Benjamin Ben Mordecai to his Friends, for embracing Christianity; in several Letters to Elisha Levi, merchant of Amsterdam," 1773. Henry Taylor, Rector of Cranley, and Vicar of Portsmouth, died in 1785.

** See *Sequel*, 1776, pp. 298—384.

the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son."* What can be more evident from this, than that God spake to mankind by his Son only *in the last days*, or the times of the gospel, and not in any former period of time? Yet you say, that *Socinians* put forced and unnatural constructions on the language of Scripture!

I heartily join with you, Sir, in your exhortation to excite the zeal of the learned members of your church, in the defence of its peculiar doctrines, and also to interest *the common people* in this controversy. With respect to every argument of importance, these are as capable of judging as we can pretend to be. Let the twenty thousand copies of the pamphlet recommended by you,† be immediately printed and dispersed. I fear not the consequence. It was, I find, one of the many pieces that were written to counteract the effect of one of my own, entitled, "An Appeal to the serious Professors of Christianity,"‡ many of which have been dispersed, and with a success far exceeding my expectations from it. A like advantage to what I think to be the cause of truth, has resulted from the publication of another small piece, entitled, "A general View of the Arguments for the Unity of God, and against the Divinity or Preexistence of Christ, from Reason, from the Scriptures, and from History."§

My principal expectations, however, are from the ingenuous *youth*, whose prejudices are not so rivetted as those of persons more advanced in life; and for this reason I shall take the liberty to address a few letters to those young men in the two Universities, who are intended for the service of the church. They will, of course, read your publications, and I hope they will do me, or rather themselves, and the cause of truth, the justice to read both sides.

You are pleased to say of my conduct, in one respect, "It is fair, it is manly, it is noble, it is kind."‖ Be assured, Sir, you shall never find it otherwise. And be this controversy of longer or shorter continuance, I shall be mindful of the advice you give to your friends, "that it be conducted

* See Vol. XIV. p. 347.

† *Sermons*, p. 20. *(P.)* "An excellent little tract," says Dr. Horne, "was printed in 1774. I wish 20,000 of them were dispersed through the kingdom at this time. It was entitled, 'a Preservative against the Publications dispersed by modern Socinians; in which the Impiety and Absurdity of their Principles are clearly shewn; addressed by a Country Clergyman to his Parishioners.'" *Works*, VI. p. 78, *Note*. See *infra*, "Letters to Young Men," *ad fin.*

‡ See Vol. II. pp. 383—404.

§ See *Appendix*, No. VII.

‖ *Sermons*, p. 12. *(P.)* *Works*, VI. p. 70.

in an honourable way, according to the laws of war."* In this respect, I have uniformly observed one rule, which you, Sir, as well as most of my antagonists, have neglected; which is to send a copy of my tracts to every person who is particularly noticed in them. This has always appeared to me to be fair and proper; and I wish that, for the future, it may be considered as indispensable in these literary contests.

Having nothing farther, of much consequence, to address to yourself in particular, I conclude with once more assuring you, that I think myself singularly happy in having found so learned and candid an antagonist, and waiting your own time (reminding you however, of my own motto *Ars longa, Vita brevis)* for the appearance of your large work,† I subscribe myself, with the greatest respect.

Rev. Sir,

Your very humble servant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

Birmingham, March 1, 1787.

LETTERS TO THE YOUNG MEN,

WHO ARE IN A

COURSE OF EDUCATION FOR THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY,

AT THE

UNIVERSITIES OF OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE.

Multa ferunt anni venientes commoda secum,
Multa recedentes adimunt.

HORACE.

LETTER I.

Of Subscription to Articles of Faith.

GENTLEMEN,

EXCUSE the address of a stranger, whose apology for it is, an earnest desire of contributing what may be in his power to your forming a right judgment concerning some subjects,

* *Sermons*, p. 9. (*P.*) *Works*, p. 67.

† This projected Work never appeared. See *supra*, p. 825, *Note*.

which it imports you to understand, and of giving you such representations of things as you are not so likely to receive from any other quarter. In many things, no doubt, your professors and tutors, are much better qualified to give you instruction, than I can pretend to be; and with respect to these, I am very willing to submit to their superiority, and to yours. But with respect to some other things, you may easily imagine, that they may not have been in the way of having their own attention called to them so much as mine has been; and therefore, with the best intentions in the world, in the discharge of their duty to you, they will naturally be less explicit in their instructions. It is in no other case that I would presume to solicit your attention. To your own good sense and candour, I therefore entirely refer myself. If by reading this address you should see any thing in a new and juster light than you have hitherto done, my end will be answered; and if not, it will not be much of your time that will be lost upon it. My own time I cannot better employ, than in making the attempt.

As those who are designed to teach the principles of the Christian religion to the rest of the community, I consider you as destined to fill a station of the greatest honour and importance in your country; and I wish you to be truly sensible of the honour and importance of it; not to make you proud of the rank it will give you, but to inspire you with an earnest desire, and a laudable ambition, to discharge the duties of it in the best manner. For in this case only, does any man either receive honour from his station, or do honour to it.

In order to teach religion with advantage to others, you will agree with me that it ought to be well understood by yourselves; and we cannot expect to understand any thing of this consequence, without giving proper *time* to the study of it. Articles of faith are things of moment, and therefore we should not form a hasty judgment concerning them, but deliberately weigh before we decide. And in this respect it is that I must take the liberty to request you seriously to consider the propriety of your present customs, as you are required to subscribe to what it cannot be supposed you have had sufficient time to *study*, and therefore cannot be supposed to *understand*.

Such a custom suited perfectly well with the times of darkness and bigotry, in which it was established. The great object then, was the public profession of the same faith, which it was thought could not be secured too early;

and the extinction of all schism, which it was thought could not be too carefully guarded against ; and not *solid instruction*, and a well-grounded knowledge of what was professed. This could not have been gained without previous *inquiry* and discussion, in which there would have been some hazard of persons forming different judgments; and then the favourite article of the *Unity of the Catholic Church* would have been in danger of being broken.

But, happily, we now see things in a very different light. We refuse to receive the principles of *philosophy*, and certainly should not receive those of *religion*, without being satisfied, from proper evidence, with respect to their truth. Whatever use there may be in *union*, there cannot be any in *ignorance*, or in an agreement in words without an agreement in ideas. And it is in vain for persons to pretend to an agreement in judgment, when none of them have formed any proper *judgment* in the case, having made no previous *inquiry*, on which alone such a judgment can be formed. Two blind men may agree in their evidence with respect to the colour of an object, but would any jury be influenced by such evidence ? And no better than this is the agreement of men in articles of faith, concerning the truth of which they have made no inquiry.

Persons can, then, only be properly said to think alike, when they see things in the same light, and when the same arguments have the same weight with them. But in order to this, there must be a previous clear perception of the *subject* concerning which a judgment is to be formed, and an equally clear perception of the nature and force of the *evidence* on which it is formed. Also the more important any subject is, the greater care should we take to form a right judgment concerning it. Since, therefore, *religion* is of all subjects the most important, it behoves us to take the greatest *care*, and consequently to employ the most *time*, in investigating the principles of it.

By no means, then, ever declare your assent to any *articles* of faith (and the most solemn of all declarations is the mode of *subscription*) before you have carefully considered what each of those articles is, and have really satisfied yourselves that you see the evidence on which the truth of them is founded. If the subscription be tendered to you before that process has commenced, or before it can have been completed, resolutely decline it. It becomes every honest man so to do : because otherwise he signs he knows not what ; though he virtually says that he has *considered*

what he has done, and is satisfied with respect to the propriety of it. If you would not set your hand to a common bond, without previously reading it, and approving of it, surely your minds ought to revolt at the idea of subscribing articles of faith which you have not examined. And yet, some, I fear, do this without having so much as read them, or being able to say what propositions they have signed their assent to.

The probability is, that the greater part of you, who will ever think of reading this address, have already subscribed the Articles of the Church of England; having done it at your matriculation, that is, on your admission to that place of education in which you were to study them, than which nothing more preposterous can well be imagined. In this case, as persons who have unintentionally done wrong, proceed no farther; and do not, by availing yourselves of any advantages accruing from it, make that to be a deliberate falsehood, which originally was nothing more than an oversight. Truth and uprightness require that you renounce your subscription, and every thing consequent upon it. Because, till you be satisfied that what you have subscribed is true, so that you could, *bonâ fide*, repeat the subscription, you ought to consider yourselves as not having subscribed at all.

I take it for granted, you will not think that *religion* is the only subject with respect to which a person may be lawfully guilty of a known falsehood, or prevarication; or that God, in whose presence the subscription is made, is the only Being who may be safely mocked and trifled with. What can you hereafter say to any man, who shall have made a false declaration of any other kind, or have taken a false oath, when you will be conscious to yourselves that you have made a declaration in which there was as little sincerity, and that you made a solemn profession of what you did not know to be true, or might have known to be false; and that you reap the benefit of such false declaration and profession?

This, Gentlemen, is a case that will not bear arguing. Every upright mind must decide upon it immediately, and all the attempts that have been made to apologize for subscription to articles of faith that are not really believed, or, which is the same thing, have never been examined, or for holding the possession of any thing to which such a subscription introduced a man, can only expose the chicanery of those who have recourse to them. In any other case similar to this, every clergyman would say with David, *As*

the Lord liveth, such a thing ought not to be. But how many of them are there, to whom, after such a declaration, it might be said, *Thou art the man!*

This is certainly the case with all *Arians* and *Socinians* in the Church of England, of all who admit the principles of Dr. Clarke's *Treatise on the Trinity*,* or any other, in which the Son of God is maintained to be, in any sense, inferior to the Father, or to be no proper object of prayer. For in one of your creeds† it is expressly said, that of the *three persons in the Trinity*, "none is afore, or after another: none is greater or less than another;" and in your *Litany* petitions are addressed to "God the Son," and "God the Holy Ghost," as well as to "God the Father."

With the greatest respect, I am,
Gentlemen,
Your sincere well-wisher,
J. PRIESTLEY.

LETTER II.

Of the Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity.

GENTLEMEN,

THOUGH I do not mean to trouble you with my thoughts on many articles of your Christian faith, there is *one* which, on account of its peculiar magnitude, I cannot help recommending to your most deliberate consideration, viz. *the object of religious worship*. From the nature of the thing, you cannot but be sensible, that *this* must be an article of the first and last importance; and therefore on this subject you certainly ought not to form a hasty or rash judgment, but bring to the study of it your best faculties, and give it your closest attention.

In a matter of this consequence, let no man, or body of men, judge for you, but honestly and fairly judge for yourselves; because you are individually responsible for the use that you make of your faculties. Consider that, on the very same principle on which any person in this country may imagine that he may safely acquiesce in the judgment of *the Church of England*, a person in *France* or *Italy* will be justified in acquiescing in the judgment of *the Church of Rome*, and may receive without examination the doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, or the worship of *Mary* and all the *Saints*.

* "Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity," first published in 1712.
† The *Athanasian*.

If you are sensible that they ought not to bow down and worship *Mary*, on the authority of *the Church of Rome*, neither ought you to worship *the Son of Mary*, on the authority of *the Church of England*, but should first satisfy yourselves, whether the Son of Mary be your God and Maker. If he himself have a *God and Father*, and the same God and Father with yourselves, you are brethren; and you ought no more, without an express divine authority for it, to worship him, than he ought to worship you. You are equally dependent upon the same great God and Father of all; and neither of you has any thing but what He gave, what you are alike accountable to him for, and what he can resume at his sovereign pleasure.

But I do not mean, in this address, to enter into the particulars of the argument with you, but only to exhort you, though with all possible earnestness, to inquire and judge for yourselves; and do not think yourselves unqualified to form a judgment in the case. As far as *reason* is concerned in the discussion, use your reason; where *scripture* is appealed to, consult the Scriptures; and when recourse must be had to *antiquity*, carefully read the monuments of it, especially in the writings of those who are usually called *the fathers*, so strongly recommended to you by the Dean of Canterbury; and for this you enjoy uncommon advantages, in the noble libraries to which you have access. We Dissenters have no such privileges. All the knowledge we get of this kind is the result of much trouble and much expense.

If, not wholly relying on your own investigation, you have recourse to the assistance of others, read the publications on both sides of the question, and pay no regard to the authority of *names*, but only to the weight of *argument*.

The Dean of Canterbury, I am sorry to perceive, has only recommended such works as were professedly written in defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, which is not of a piece with his usual candour and liberality. Very different from this, and certainly more worthy of a Christian and Protestant bishop, is the conduct of the present excellent bishop of Llandaff, who, in the *list of books* which he recommends to the students in divinity, has inserted works written for and against every doctrine of importance.*

As this great question is now in the course of public discussion, between myself and the ablest writers of your own

* See Bp. Watson's "Collection of Theological Tracts," 1785.

church, and you cannot be wholly unconcerned spectators, read the productions of both. You may be well assured that, considering the ability of the writers in favour of the doctrine of the Trinity, their number, and the zeal with which they enter into the controversy, together with the opportunities which they and their numerous friends (who will not fail to give them all the assistance in their power) have of consulting the most valuable libraries, every thing will be produced that can be favourable to their argument. If, therefore, it be possible to prove that the doctrine of the Trinity is not contrary to reason, that it is agreeable to the Scriptures, and that it has the countenance of primitive antiquity, it will be done.

But if, after all that can be alleged, you cannot help thinking that *three divine persons* must be *three Gods*, which our religion reprobates; that Christ is the messenger and servant of God, and not God himself; and that the great body of common Christians, in primitive times, (the very persons for whose use the books of the *New Testament* were written, and who must have understood them, and the doctrine of the apostles, from whom they had their instruction,) were *Unitarians*, believing that divinity is to be ascribed to no other than to one God the Father, and that Christ was simply "a prophet mighty in deed and word;" (*Luke* xxiv. 19;) "a man approved of God, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him;"* (*Acts* ii. 22;) you must conclude that, notwithstanding the ability, learning and integrity, of my opponents, their cause is indefensible; that the reformed *Church of England* is idolatrous, as well as the *Church of Rome;* and, therefore, that till she be farther reformed, you ought to *come out of her and be separate.*

You will, of course, hear many sermons, and see many treatises, against my publications in defence of the Divine Unity, but do me the justice to read the books and tracts which have alarmed your superiors so much; you will find them written perhaps with less ability, and less learning, than those of my antagonists, but with a sincere *love of truth.* While the controversy continues, I pledge myself to acknowledge any oversight that, in so copious an argument, I may be guilty of, and shall let nothing of any moment pass unnoticed. I am even willing to adopt any method that shall be thought, by my adversaries themselves, most to facilitate the fullest investigation of the subject. I openly call

* See Vol. XIII. p. 393.

upon every one, who has any considerable character at stake, and who has entered into the lists, such as Dr. Horsley, Mr. White, Mr. Howes, and Dr. Horne, to make good what they have advanced; and in these circumstances you cannot doubt their readiness to produce any thing in their power to confute and silence me.

Besides my larger works, as the *Histories* "of the Corruptions of Christianity," and "of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ," together with all the writings of Mr. Lindsey, permit me to recommend to your perusal, a small pamphlet entitled, "A General View of the Arguments for the Unity of God," &c., mentioned p. 344. You will find it of great use in estimating the progress that may be made in the discussion, as it takes in the whole compass of it, from reason, from the Scriptures, and from history; so that if any of my arguments be found to be defective, you will easily see how many remain unanswered, and what is their proper place and weight in the whole controversy.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

Of the Difficulties attending an open Acknowledgment of Truth.

GENTLEMEN,

I AM truly sensible of the peculiar difficulties attending your situation. Many of you, I believe, have no other prospect in life but that of officiating in a church, in which the doctrine of the Trinity, to the examination of which I wish to draw your attention, is actually received. It even enters into her forms of devotion; so that for the present you have no choice but to subscribe her articles, and make use of her forms, or give up all hopes of preferment or employment. Should you, therefore, after the examination which I now recommend, see reason (as I cannot help suspecting you will) to decline that subscription, and all your prospects in life depending upon it, you may be much embarrassed.

To this I can only say, that great as the difficulty, no doubt, will be, it will be less *now*, than if, venturing to take a step which your minds disapprove, you should be struck with a sense of the impropriety of this transaction, in a later period of your lives; when you will be actually engaged in an employment, the duties of which you cannot conscientiously discharge, with the additional burden of a wife and

family, and when it may be too late to look out for any other source of subsistence. Many worthy persons, I do assure you, are at this very time in this most painful situation, wishing it was with them as it is now with you, who clearly see what *duty* requires, and acutely feel how *nature*, and all its ties, oppose it.

Some years ago, a clergyman, then turned sixty, with a wife and a numerous family, told me his distressing case, with tears literally running down his cheeks. It was not for me to advise what I might not have been capable of doing in the same circumstances. He himself knew but too well what strict duty required. I could only mix my tears with his. For such men as these, whose complaints are only uttered in private, our present governors and their own ecclesiastical superiors, seem to have no feeling. But there is a great Being, *higher than the highest*, who knows, and who will one day visit for these things.

Strongly as you may feel your own difficulties, you cannot but be sensible how much they are exceeded by those of the case which I have now mentioned. Besides, if virtuous resolution is to be expected of man, it is to be expected of *youth*. That is the period of life the most distinguished for a generous ardour in the pursuit of truth, for an ingenuous disposition, unperverted by a commerce with the world, and a vigour of mind equal to any trial. Act, then, a part becoming enlightened, virtuous, and generous British youth. Confer together, and associate in your common cause. A petition for a removal of subscription to any human articles of faith, and for a reformation of the public liturgy, or for leave to alter it with the consent of your parishioners, would, I am confident, have more weight from you than from any other description of men in the kingdom.

Tell our governors that you are ready to render your country the best services in your power in promoting the knowledge and practice of Christianity, but that there are obstructions in your way, which prevent your engaging in this great work, and which would defeat your purpose if you did; that you cannot, with a good grace, or with effect, inculcate the principles of honesty and integrity on others, after, by a public and solemn act, violating them yourselves; that it will be your happiness, and your glory, to teach Christianity, but not the manifest abuses and corruptions of it, doctrines which militate with the fundamental principles of it; that you cannot, at the same time, preach the religion of Christ, and worship another Being than him whom Christ

worshipped, and whom he taught all his disciples to worship, as *the only true God.*

Tell them that, after an alteration in the forms of public worship, you can with infinitely more advantage teach those principles which are truly great, and essential to Christianity, and on which alone its efficacy to purify the heart, and to reform the life, can depend; and that, provided this great end be gained, the object of all good and wise government will be answered; for that the welfare of society, which is the sole object of civil government, cannot possibly have any necessary connexion with the mysterious doctrine of the Trinity. Tell them that it is sufficient if, believing nothing but what they can understand, men be good citizens, and that this will be best effected by inculcating the great doctrine of a life of retribution after death, a state in which men will receive according to their *works*, not according to their *opinions.*

If you cannot engage a sufficient number to make a respectable application to your superiors, in church or state, still do what integrity requires of you as individuals. It is what many, to their infinite honour, have done before you. A considerable number of the most intelligent and best disposed young men have declined entering into the ministry, when they seriously reflected on the terms on which they must have done it; men, whose ability and integrity would have qualified them to be the greatest ornaments of their profession, if the entrance into it had not been too narrow to admit them.

I cannot help flattering myself, however, that an earnest representation from even a few of you, of your peculiarly difficult situation, would not be without its effect; and then your country would be indebted to you for its emancipation from a bondage which, in consequence of the progress of religious knowledge, must be every day more severely felt, a bondage which cannot affect any but the intelligent and the ingenuous; those who wish well to the cause of *virtue*, but who cannot promote it except in the way of *truth.* In all events, however, you will have done your duty; and greater guilt will remain on those who refuse so reasonable a request.

Where religion is concerned, do not deceive yourselves by waiting till some *great man*, in the church or the state take the lead. Neither was Christianity propagated, nor the reformation begun, by this means. Individuals of all ranks thought and acted for themselves, and those who had

influence in public measures favoured them when it appeared to be their interest so to do. And, in the nature of things, nothing else could be expected. Persons in years, or who have establishments for life, have generally hit upon some method or other to make themselves easy; and wishing to continue so, they are offended at any thing that is likely to create disturbance. Thus disposed, they will never be at a loss for some plausible pretext for *putting off*, at least, every proposal of reformation. There are, however, such liberal characters on the episcopal bench, at this time, that I almost persuade myself, they would countenance and assist such an application as I propose.

As to ministers of state, they must, and ought, to follow the lead of the people. Make it appear to them that the country in general wishes for a reformation, or that many earnestly desire it, and that the rest would not violently oppose it, and depend upon it, *they* will not. It is our business, therefore, without troubling ourselves about the conduct of others, to look to our own, to get all the light we can ourselves, and to do every thing in our power to enlighten the minds of others; confident that the general prevalence of truth will, in due time, draw after it every thing that we can desire, with respect to *public reformation*, and *public liberty*.

With respect to the *common people* of this country, it would be doing them great injustice to consider them as Trinitarians. More than nine in ten, I am pretty confident, would be better pleased with an *Unitarian* than a *Trinitarian* liturgy, though they do not interest themselves so much in the affair, as to take any steps towards promoting it.

There can even be no doubt but that the thinking part of the clergy really wish for some alteration in the articles, and the form of public worship, and that they would prefer one in which all religious worship should be confined to *one God, the Father*, could they be sure that every thing else relating to the establishment might remain unaltered. Of the learned clergy, it is almost certain that those who approve of the sentiments of Dr. Clarke, are more in number than the rigid *Trinitarians*, who would be clamorous against any change. Were the younger clergy, therefore, and candidates for the ministry, in earnest, for a reformation, it could not, in all probability, be kept back much longer.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

Animadversions on Dr. Purkis's Sermon.

GENTLEMEN,

THE preceding Letters were written in consequence of reading the Dean of Canterbury's truly candid *Sermons*, and I was led to think of addressing myself to *you*, as well as to *him* on the occasion, on account of his being president of a college in Oxford. Since the writing of them, I have seen another *Sermon*,* preached by Dr. Purkis, one of the preachers of the King's Chapel, at Whitehall, "before the University of Cambridge, on Commencement Sunday, July 2, 1786," which, if the writer may be credited,† was received with as much applause as those of the Dean of Canterbury, who is of Oxford.

Though I think such mere declamation utterly unworthy of an university that has a *Newton* to boast of, and do not see that it contains any thing particularly deserving of a reply, I shall take occasion from it to shew the extreme weakness of some things on which great stress is laid with respect to the discussion that is now before the public, and others of a similar nature. One would think, indeed, that such things could only be said *ad captandum vulgus*, and could never have been addressed to those who are brought up in a freedom from vulgar prejudices, which ought to be one great object in a course of *liberal education*.

* "On the Influence of the present Pursuits in Learning as they affect Religion." See *Mon. Rev.* LXXVIII. pp. 542—544.

† The doubt here intimated was occasioned by the following anonymous letter, which shews that one of our Universities, at least, is not destitute of liberality:

"I lose no time in transmitting to you a discourse which did much violence to my feelings at the time I heard it delivered, from the University pulpit. So far is the author's boast in the advertisement from being true, that I believe his sermon gave serious concern to several very respectable, learned, and liberal men among his audience, which, it being *Commencement Sunday*, was a very numerous one, as well as to myself. It was preached as an exercise for his doctor's degree. The publisher informs me, that the greatest part of the impression has been sent by the author as presents to bishops and great men. I trust you will not be wanting to check the *poison* of its influence, to speak like the author, for which I blush, as I should at any thing that savoured of an unchristian spirit. An answer from your masterly pen, I have reason to believe, will give great satisfaction to many conscientious lovers of truth in this University, but I assure you, to none more than to your hearty well-wisher in the gospel cause, who professes *ex animo* to be a sincere inquirer into the *truth as it is in Jesus*.

"Cambridge, Nov. 27, 1786." *(P.)*

1. *Of the Influence of Philosophy on Religion.*

Dr. Purkis preaches from *Col.* ii. 8: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy, and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of this world, and not after Christ." By this he, no doubt, meant to insinuate that myself, and other *Unitarians*, who have some pretensions to philosophy, are just such philosophers as the apostle *Paul* had to do with, their principles being the same, having the same connexion with religion, the same influence upon it, and tending alike to fill the mind with pride and self-conceit. Hence the phrases, "a minute mind busied with remarking only the track of its own experiments,"* "a vain presuming person,"† "dogmatical arrogance."‡ Indeed, without this construction, Dr. Purkis's text and discourse could not be thought to be peculiarly "seasonable *at this time*," as the advertisement prefixed to it expresses.

Now really, Gentlemen, there is no foundation whatever for any of these insinuations or reflections. The philosophy which the apostle alluded to was, undoubtedly, that of the *Gnostics*, the principles of which you will see detailed in my "History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ," and which you may find in any book of ecclesiastical history. Please, then, to examine them, and see whether you can find in them any resemblance to the modern *experimental philosophy*, with which (notwithstanding its supposed evil tendency) you are, I doubt not, well acquainted. The *Gnostics* made no experiments at all. Their notions were all *metaphysical*, *mythological*, or *theological*, and therefore, naturally interfered with and contaminated the Christian principles; whereas, experimental philosophy is wholly unconnected with them, any farther than as all truth has a connexion.

Accordingly we see that there have been experimental philosophers, as well as mathematicians, of every opinion with respect to the doctrine of the *Trinity*. If, therefore, this kind of science tends to make men *proud*, there must be proud and conceited *Trinitarians*, as well as *Unitarians*, and there are who think that my antagonist, Dr. Horsley, might be quoted as a proof of this. But, in fact, experimental philosophy tends to make us humble; as it shews, in the strongest light, the immensity of nature, the unsearchable wisdom of the Author of nature, and the narrowness

* *Sermon*, p. 9. (*P.*) † *Ibid.* (*P.*) ‡ *Ibid.* p. 8. (*P.*)

of our comprehension. Other persons *hear* of these truths, but experimental philosophers *feel* them; and it is chiefly from their report that others derive their knowledge of them. Let Dr. Purkis also say, what experimental philosophy has to do with *the traditions of men*, or *the rudiments of this world*.—Indeed, Gentlemen, no man could know any thing of modern philosophy, or of *Gnosticism*, and say what Dr. Purkis does on this subject. It is all groundless insinuation and calumny, void of all colour or resemblance of truth, and calculated to prejudice the mind both against philosophy and rational theology.

There is more pride, Gentlemen, in disclaiming reason, and affecting to be governed by a principle superior to it, than in humbly following it. Besides, it has been well observed, that no man abandons reason till reason has abandoned him.

2. *Of Mysteries in Religion.*

If *mysteries* mean, as Dr. Purkis says they do, "things in their own nature incomprehensible,"* I must say that the Scriptures know no such mysteries, but only things that were for some time unknown, but which were perfectly intelligible when they were made known. The term is never applied to any thing concerning *the nature of God*, but only to the dispensations of his providence, and almost wholly to that one particular in his dispensations, the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, without burdening them with the observance of the Jewish ritual. But how can this be said to be a thing in its "own nature incomprehensible"? It had been, as the apostle calls it, [*Col.* i. 26,] a secret, or "mystery,—hid from ages," but it was then *made known*, and when made known, was perfectly intelligible.

What Paul calls (1 *Tim.* iii. 16) *the great mystery of godliness* consisted of such particulars relating to Christianity as are all perfectly intelligible, when made known, as (even admitting the common reading) *God manifest in the flesh*, that is, speaking to mankind by the man Christ Jesus, &c. &c.† Suffer not your minds, therefore, to be dazzled by the doctrine of mysteries in religion, and the submission of *reason* to *faith*. By the same bait you may be drawn in to believe the doctrine of *Transubstantiation*. For the Catholics use the very same arguments in its defence, that

* *Sermon*, p. 10. (*P.*)

† See Vol. XIV. pp. 132—134.

the Trinitarians do in the defence of that of the Trinity. They are both said to be doctrines of *pure revelation*, and that it is not the province of *reason* to examine them. In reality, they are neither agreeable to reason nor revelation.

3. *Of Toleration.*

If any subject had been well understood, I should have thought it had been that of toleration. But I perceive it is of very difficult comprehension to those who have it in their power to be intolerant. It happens to be unfashionable to deny the doctrine of it *in words*, but its *principles* are certainly undermined by the limitations of it in this sermon of Dr. Purkis. For he would not tolerate "the disbelievers of the gospel,"* saying, that "the religion of Jesus manifestly excludes every other; and that we must adhere to this exclusive principle, if we assert its divine authority."†

This, Gentlemen, you must see to be the most palpable of all fallacies. In one sense, indeed, every truth is *exclusive*, because it cannot be received together with the opposite error, the one necessarily excluding the other, that is, in the mind of the same person. But in no other sense is the religion of Christ, any more than the principles of true philosophy, of an exclusive nature. Whereas Dr. Purkis means, that the professors of Christianity ought not to suffer any other religion to be professed, if they have power to prevent it, which is a doctrine that neither Christ nor the apostles give any countenance to. *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual.* (2 *Cor.* x. 4.) If Christianity itself be of this exclusive nature, the same property must belong to every thing that is essential to it; and consequently, *Trinitarians*, thinking their peculiar doctrines essential to Christianity, will think themselves justified in exterminating all *Unitarians*, as well as *Jews* and *Mahometans*, as *disbelievers* of true Christianity.

But must not Dr. Purkis allow that, if the civil governors of a country, *as such*, have a right to use their power in support of what they deem to be true religion, *Heathens* and *Mahometans* have the same right to persecute Christians, that Christians have to persecute them? The Christian maxim of *doing to others as we would be done by, ourselves*, is as justly applicable to this case as to any other whatever. If, therefore, we Christians would think it right that we should be tolerated among Heathens or Mahometans, we ought to tolerate them among us.

* *Sermon*, p. 20. (*P.*) † *Ibid.* p. 21. (*P.*)

4. *Of perverting the Language of the Scriptures.*

Dr. Purkis says, "Next to this turn for a philosophical system in religion, we remarked a sceptical desire of arguing away the phraseology of Scripture, when it seems to convey doctrines above our comprehension, in order to reduce them to the level of our own opinions," &c. &c. &c.*

Now I dare say, that Dr. Purkis, believing in the truth of the Scriptures, and likewise in other truths not contained in the Scriptures, will endeavour to reconcile them as well as he can, as also to reconcile one scripture truth with another; for they cannot *both* be believed, unless they can be reconciled; and what is this but the very thing that he charges the *Unitarians* with, as an unpardonable fault? For example, he, as a *Protestant*, cannot believe that a piece of bread is changed into flesh, while the properties of bread remain in it, though our Saviour has said of the sacramental bread, *This is my body*. What then does he do, but explain away this phraseology, by supposing that it is a figurative expression; and merely because the doctrine of "*the literal sense* is above his comprehension, reduces it to the level of his own opinion." In this very language, he would be reproved for his conduct by a *Catholic* disputant. Why then does he see a mote in my eye, and not the beam that is in his own eye?

But in reality, Gentlemen, the plain language of Scripture is much more directly in favour of *Unitarianism* than of the doctrine of the *Trinity;* and it is with difficulty made to accord to the latter. The great doctrine of the strict *unity of God*, and also that of the *pure humanity of Christ*, is the common language of the Scriptures, where no figure is used, or can be suspected. As when the apostle says, (1 *Tim.* ii. 5,) to us "there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." By what construction of words and phrases can the doctrine of the Trinity be reconciled with this passage? Must not the literal meaning be explained away, before it can be made consistent with that mysterious doctrine?†

The texts which the Unitarians have to accommodate to their system are very few indeed, compared with those which the Trinitarians must subject to their mode of torture.

* *Sermon*, p. 12. (*P.*)

† See Vol. XIV. pp. 126, 127.

5. *Of Materialism and the Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity.*

Dr. Purkis is not singular in endeavouring to throw an odium upon myself and others, as *Materialists*, as if the doctrine of an *immaterial* soul was essential to Christianity. I shall not argue this matter with Dr. Purkis, having already advanced all that I think necessary for the purpose in my *Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit*, * in which I am satisfied that I have made it as evident as any thing of this nature can be, that the popular doctrine of a soul has no foundation in reason, or the Scriptures, but was borrowed from the Heathen philosophy. I shall now only observe to you, that the doctrine of a soul is of no consequence *in itself*, or to *a Christian*, but as an argument for a future life.

If, therefore, any person does firmly believe that he shall live again, and receive according to his works, which is the great and ultimate doctrine of Christianity, of what consequence is it whether he believe that he has a soul or not? It is enough that he believes that his power of thinking (which is the only province of a soul) will be restored to him at the resurrection, and that he will have a perfect recollection of all the transactions of the present life. And this I believe as firmly as any of those who hold the doctrine of a soul. In what respects, then, is my faith of less value than theirs?

With as little reason do Dr. Purkis and others suppose that, by the doctrine of *Philosophical Necessity*, which I hold, and which I consider as even demonstrably true, "every principle," as he says, "of right and wrong, of moral goodness and moral government, has been in reality removed from our sight, and, of course, the necessity of all law and religion whatsoever."†

Now, in my writings on this subject, I have proved it, and shall not take the trouble to prove any more, that the doctrine of *Necessity* supplies the only theoretical foundation of moral government, and that the opposite doctrine affords no foundation for it at all. But, independently of this, with respect to the real consequences of any doctrine, those who hold it, and not those who deny it, should be consulted; for if I myself do not perceive that such consequences flow from my system, I cannot act as if they did; and, surely, any man who believes that his actions are truly

* See Vol. III. pp. 361—446. † *Sermon*, p. 7. (*P.*)

voluntary, depending upon *motives*, and that he shall receive good or evil hereafter according to his works here, may be depended upon for giving due attention to his conduct, whatever be his opinion with respect to the nature of *the mind*, and the manner in which motives influence it. Can Dr. Purkis shew that Necessarians are at all less solicitous about their moral conduct than other men? This is the proper test of the moral influence of any system.

It is commonly said, that the doctrine of *Necessity* tends to make men *indifferent to all action*, all events being predetermined by God, and all sure to work right, and end well. But how does this supposition correspond to fact? Dr. Horne says, "our opponents," among whom he undoubtedly includes myself, "are shrewd, active, busy, bustling and indefatigable."* How far this character applies to myself I will not say; but I will venture to assert that, change the term *shrewd* (which is always used in a bad sense) for *intelligent*, or *sensible*, and the rest of the description applies to many *Necessarians*, and that some of the advocates for *Philosophical Liberty* are the most indolent of mankind.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

Of Mr. Jones's Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity.

GENTLEMEN,

As the worthy Dean of Canterbury strongly recommends to you Mr. Jones's "Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity, proved by above a hundred short and clear arguments, expressed in the terms of the Holy Scripture, compared after a manner entirely new;"† no doubt esteeming it to be a master-piece of reasoning, I am tempted to give you a specimen of his mode of arguing on the subject. To pursue him through all his *hundred arguments* will hardly be required of me; as every text on which any thing that *to other persons* has had the appearance of an argument, has been built, is satisfactorily explained in my small pamphlet entitled, "A Familiar Illustration of certain Passages of Scripture,"‡ and more at large in the writings of Mr. Lindsey.

The foundation of the more specious of Mr. Jones's arguments is the following: If any language be applied to

* *Works*, VI. p. 69.

† An early publication by Bishop Horne's intimate friend and biographer, who died in 1799. There was a third edition of the *Catholic Doctrine* in 1767.

‡ Vol. II. pp. 430—480.

God, and the same be ever applied to Christ; or if the same act should be ascribed to them both, it is with him a proof that Christ must be God; without considering that the same language and the same actions may be ascribed to God, and also to man, in different senses.

Thus, because we read in *Isaiah* xliii. 11, "I, even I, am the Lord, and besides me there is no Saviour;" and Christ is also called *a Saviour*, (as in 2 *Peter* iii. 18, "Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,") he concludes that Christ must be God, saying, "Unless he were God, even the Lord Jehovah, as well as man, he could not be *a Saviour*, because the Lord has declared there is no Saviour besides himself. It is therefore rightly observed by the apostle, Phil. ii. 9, that God in dignifying the man Christ with the name of *Jesus*, has given him a name above every name, even that of *a Saviour*, which is his own name, and such as can belong to no other."*

But, by the very same argument, *Moses*, and many other persons, might be proved to be God, because they are called *Saviours*, having been made *the means* of delivering the people of Israel, or others, from some of the difficulties in which they were involved, as in *Neh.* ix. 27: "Thou gavest them Saviours, who saved them," &c. In the same sense Christ is also properly called *a Saviour*, as having been the instrument in the hand of God of saving mankind from sin, and from death, the consequence of sin; and that *Christ* was no more than the *instrument* in the hands of God for this end, is as evident, and as clearly expressed in the Scriptures, as that *Moses* was his *instrument* in delivering the people of Israel from Egypt. They are both said to be *sent*, or commissioned, by God, for the purpose.

On the same principle Mr. Jones argues, that because we read, *John* iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son," and, *Eph.* v. 25, "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it," that *Christ* and *God* must be the same.† He well observes, in his *advertisement*, that "his arguments are, to the best of his knowledge, most of them, *new*." Indeed, I should have thought it very extraordinary, if the comparison of these two texts had suggested the same argument to any other individual person besides himself; though when suggested by him, it may have approved itself to the better sense of the Dean of Canterbury.

* *Catholic Doctrine*, p. 3. *(P.)* † *Ibid.* p. 18. *(P.)*

In reply to it, it can hardly be necessary to inform you, Gentlemen, that God might love the world, and having the power to dispose of Christ, as of all his other creatures, as he pleased, might *send* him, *give* him, or *appoint* him, for the purpose of saving the world from ignorance and vice, at the same time that Christ, engaging in this benevolent undertaking with the same readiness and cheerfulness with which all persons ought to obey the commands of God, and being a man himself, and, as such, having the most sincere good-will and compassion towards his fellow-men, might also *love* them, and be said to *give himself* for them. As *Paul* likewise, and other apostles, loved the church, and gave their lives for it, which it is evident they did, whether that particular language be ever used with respect to them in the Scriptures or not, Mr. Jones might prove from this circumstance, that *they* are also each of them God, equal to the Father.

Mr. Jones even argues that Christ is of a divine nature, because, in 2 *Peter* i. 4, Christians are said to be "partakers of the divine nature,"* and, in *Heb.* iii. 14, they are said to be "partakers of Christ."† Therefore, says he, "Christ is in, or of the divine nature, the same Almighty God and Lord who declared to Abraham, 'I am thy shield, and exceeding great reward;' so that these being compared together, are decisive for the Catholic Homoousion doctrine, at which the Arians, from the Council of Nice to this very day, have been so greviously offended."‡

Mr. Jones was not, perhaps, aware that, by this mode of reasoning, he was supplying the Roman Catholics with a new argument for their doctrine of *Transubstantiation*. But if every thing of which Christians are said to be *partakers* be the same, the sacramental bread must be concluded to be Christ himself; for it is said, (1 *Cor.* x. 17,) "We are all partakers of that one bread."§

On these principles also, the distinction in the three persons of the Trinity will be confounded; for, as in *Heb.* ii. 14, Christians are said to be *partakers of Christ;* so, in *Chap.* vi. 4, they are said to be "partakers of the Holy Ghost."

I am still more surprised that Mr. Jones should not have perceived that, according to his mode of interpretation, this text in *Peter* would authorize him to conclude, that all

* See Vol. XIV. p. 414.
† See *ibid.* p. 357.
‡ *Cath. Doct.* p. 29. (*P.*)
§ See Vol. XIV. p. 92.

Christians have a proper divine nature, or are consubstantial with the Father; for, in defence of this term, which he acknowledges to be unscriptural, he says, addressing the *Arians*, "And now the Scripture is before us, let me ask them a plain question or two. Is not the word *essence* or *substance* of the same signification with the word *nature?* And have not the fathers of the church thus expounded it, and is not this phrase *of the same nature* as conclusive for the divinity of Christ, as that other *of the same substance?* Why then should that expression of the Nicene Creed be thought so offensive, when there is another in the Scripture so near of kin to it, that the Arians must be sensible that they could gain nothing by the exchange? For the divine nature, we all agree, can be but one, three divine natures, of course, making three different Gods. But the Scripture, compared as above, has asserted Christ to be of this divine nature."*

We see here, how much it is in the power of prejudice to make men blind to the most obvious considerations; for it is remarkable that the participation of a divine nature is no where so expressly predicated of Christ, as it is by *Peter*, in this passage, of *all Christians:* whereas, from the above quotation from Mr. Jones, the reader would have imagined that it was not to *Christians*, but to *Christ* only, that this participation was attributed.

I shall conclude my animadversions on Mr. Jones's medium of proof, that God and Christ are the same being, by observing, that on the very same principle *God* and *Satan* may be proved to be the same being, since the same action is ascribed to them both; for, in 2 *Sam.* xxiv. 1, we read, "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them, to say, Go, number Israel and Judah;" whereas, in the parallel history, 1 *Chron.* xxi. 1, we read, "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."†

As to all the texts of Scripture in which Christ is spoken of as *a man*, and consequently inferior to the Father, which are without number, Mr. Jones makes himself very easy about them, by saying, that "in the person of Christ there is a human soul and body, the nature of a man, which, as it cannot lay claim to what is spoken of Christ in unity with the Father, so must it receive to its own account whatever seems to degrade and disjoin him from the Father; so that

* *Cath. Doct.* p. 30. (*P.*)

† See Vol. XI. pp. 411, 412, 492.

the true Catholic Faith, which allows him to be perfect God and perfect man, is never offended, or put to its shifts, by any thing the Scripture may have said about him in either capacity." Had it therefore been asserted in the most express terms, and had it been repeated ever so often, that Christ was *not God*, it would not have staggered Mr. Jones, or put him to any shift at all; as he would instantly have replied, that the meaning was, not that *the whole person of Christ*, but only *the man*, the inferior part of him, was not God.

Surely every person must be sensible, that this is putting it absolutely out of our power to make any inference whatever from the language of Scripture, and supposing that the sacred writers had recourse to the most unworthy equivocations; for, by the same rule, if any thing consists of two parts, whatever is asserted as of *the whole* may be understood of which ever *part* any person pleases; consequently, it might be truly said of Christ, in contradiction to every thing that is most expressly related of him in the gospel history, that he was never born, that he never died, or never rose from the dead; secretly meaning, that none of these particulars could, with truth, be affirmed of his *divine nature*.

When Christ, in order to comfort his disciples under the idea of his departure from them, said that his Father (to whom he was going, and who, as God omnipresent, would be always with them) was *greater than he*, he certainly must have intended that he was greater, not than a part of himself only, but than his whole self. His meaning was, no doubt, the same with that of other pious persons, who, on being separated from their friends by death, commonly say, that they leave them to the care of one who can do more for them than *they* could.

We have an example of the manner in which Mr. Jones applies the principle I have mentioned, in his interpretation of 1 *Cor.* xi. 3: "The head of Christ is God." "The name *Christ*," he says, "does here stand, as in other places out of number, for the man Christ; otherwise it must follow, that as Christ is God, God is the head of himself, which is a contradiction; or that one God is the head of another God, which is also a contradiction."* But can you, Gentlemen, think that by *Christ*, in this passage, the apostle did not mean the whole of Christ, whatever his nature consisted of, and that God is not here said to be the head of, or

* *Cath. Doct.* p. 23. (*P.*)

superior to every part of that nature? Mr. Jones might just as well have affirmed that when, in the former part of the same verse, it is said, "The head of every man is Christ," that by *man* is to be understood, not the whole of man, but only some part of him.

As Mr. Jones is obliged to have recourse to such a miserable abuse of language with respect to the word *Christ*, he makes no less free with the term *Father*. For, in his interpretation of 1 *Cor.* viii. 6, "To us there is but one God, the Father," (a text so decisively in favour of the proper unity of God, in the person of the Father only, that there was no other method of evading the force of it,)* he says, "One God the Father is here the name of a nature, under which Christ himself, as God, is also comprehended.† And the same may be proved of it in several other places." Mr. Jones certainly was not aware of it, but this kind of reasoning is even subversive of the doctrine of the Trinity itself. For, if the term *Father* comprehend all the persons of the Trinity, it must be synonymous to the term *God*, and no proof will remain of the existence of such a person as that of the *Father;* so that the *Trinity* will be reduced to *two persons*, viz. the Son and the Holy Spirit. And if his reasoning from the phrase, *partaking of the Divine nature*, be admitted, these two will be farther reduced to one, viz. the Son, who will then, indeed, be *the one God over all.*

On this principle also we must suppose, that when Christ prayed to the Father, *John* xvii. 3, as "the only true God," he did not address himself to the person of the Father, as any common reader would imagine, but to *the Divine nature* in general; and, therefore, that his prayer was as much directed to himself as to the Father. Besides, if Mr. Jones be sufficiently authorized to consider the term *Father* as expressive of the *Divine nature* in general, why may we not be at liberty to use the term *Son* and *Holy Ghost* in the same latitude. And if each of them denote the whole of the Divine nature, the unity of God will be completely established; as we shall then have three different names for the same thing, which will be what is commonly called *Sabellianism;* according to which, the Father, who sent the Son, was himself the Son that was sent, who was born, and who died.

It is surely sufficient to point out these specimens of Mr. Jones's book, which contains nothing better, to shew you

* See Vol. XIV. p. 80.

† *Cath. Doct.* p. 21. (*P.*)

what you have to expect from the whole. But I sincerely join with the Dean of Canterbury in recommending the whole of it to your careful perusal, thinking such a defence of the doctrine of the *Trinity* to be the best refutation of it; strongly exemplifying, as it does, the wretched shifts men are reduced to, when their tenets are repugnant to common sense, and contradicted by the plain and uniform language of Scripture. Mr. Jones seems to pride himself in having mustered up "*a hundred arguments*, most of them *new*;" but he might easily have made them a thousand, and, from the manner in which they might be laid down, as likely to be *convincing*. Mr. Jones, however, should consider, that the strength of an army depends not on the number of sick and wounded, but only on that of the *effective men* in it.

Since I wrote the preceding Letters to the Dean of Canterbury, I have seen the small pamphlet so strongly recommended by him. It is entitled, "A Preservative against the Publications dispersed by modern Socinians, in which the Impiety and Absurdity of their Principles are clearly shewn." This *Preservative*, &c. contains little more than vehement exclamation against *wolves in sheep's clothing*, &c., representing the *Socinians* in the worst light, as enemies to the gospel, to God, and to their country; whose doctrines cannot fail to bring the judgments of God upon us all.

As a specimen of the sentiments and manner of this piece, I shall only select the following paragraph: "I do not know how the wit of man, when it has got this new religion, can put it into a creed. You cannot begin in the common form, I believe, &c. You must say, I do not believe—that any thing more than the religion of human reason is necessary to professors of Christianity. I have no need of faith. I want not the grace of God. I need not be called, nor elected by the Divine favour," &c.

"I remember, when I was a country school-boy, I used to hear my companions talk of raising the Devil by saying the creed backwards. Such a confession as this we have now before us, seems better calculated to answer that purpose, and is certainly fitter for a necromancer than a professor of Christianity. Yet this is the favourite object, for the interests of which a clamorous party assembled, contributed, petitioned, and blotted tons of paper. For this, an unhappy gentleman" (meaning the excellent Mr. Lindsey) "left his ministry in the Church of England, to preach up the God of Mahometans in a chamber, and calls this *confessing Christ before men*. For this their pamphlets are dis-

persed by thousands, to turn the affections of the ignorant from the inestimable truths of the gospel, and inflame their fancies with a set of opinions which can only lead them to perdition," &c. &c. &c.*

Surely, Gentlemen, I do not need to copy any more of such a pamphlet as this, and much less to reply to it. What must that cause be which requires such wretched misrepresentation of the principles and conduct of serious men, and such indecent and profane drollery to support it? I should not have thought it worth while to notice such publications as either of these of Mr. Jones, (for this pamphlet is also ascribed to him,) had they not been so earnestly recommended by so truly respectable a writer as the Dean of Canterbury. I am also informed that Mr. Jones's *Catholic Doctrine* was recommended as a work of consequence to the University of Oxford, by their Professor of Divinity, Dr. Bentham, who preceded Dr. Randolph.† I seriously hope that Dr. Horne himself will produce something much superior to the publications he so lavishly commends. If not, this controversy is already at an end.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your very humble Servant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

* *Preservative*, p. 16. *(P.)* "Concerning this piece so highly commended," says Mr. Lindsey, "I should cheerfully submit it to any rational inquirer to determine, whether it does not rather tend to recommend the persons and the doctrine which the author opposes." Lindsey's *Vindiciæ Priestleianæ*, 1788, p. 49, *Note.*

† Author of "A Vindication of the Worship of the Son and Holy Ghost, against the exceptions of Mr. Theophilus Lindsey," 1775. See *Sequel*, p. xii. The following paragraph justly exposes the manner in which Dr. Randolph pursued his inquiries:

"In vain did the learned bishop *Bull* strive to make the Antenicene fathers of his own Athanasian sentiment. With all his learning and labour, he could not wash them clean of the stain of Arianism, as he would call it, which their own writings have fixed indelibly upon them, and which has been seen and owned by Christians ancient and modern. Dr. Whitby, in his *Disquisitiones modestæ in clarissimi Bulli Defensionem Fidei Nicenæ*, replied with great ability to all the bishop's arguments in behalf of the Athanasianism of these fathers. And I should apprehend that Dr. Randolph, upon reflection, can hardly satisfy himself with his manner of passing over this work, which must be in every library in Oxford, as it is to be met with commonly on the stalls in London.

"'As to this treatise of his,' (says he,) i. e. Dr. Whitby's, 'I have it not, nor have I been able to obtain a sight of it. I believe it is out of print, and long ago buried in oblivion. But this I find, that it has been fully answered by Dr. Waterland in his first defence of his queries.—I think that Dr. Whitby made some reply to this: but whatever he had to say has been fully answered by Dr. Waterland.' *(Vindic.* pp. 100, 101.) It surely does not become the Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford, thus blindfold to resign up his faith to Dr. Waterland, and to content himself with believing with the Doctor's belief, and not with his own." *Ibid.* pp. xv. xvi.

LETTERS

TO

THE REV. DR. PRICE.

——In hac re scilicet unâ
Multum dissimiles; ad cætera penè gemelli,
Fraternis animis.

HORACE.

LETTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

DEAR FRIEND,

WITHOUT any view to engaging you in a controversy which you have expressed a fixed resolution to decline,* but merely from the satisfaction I feel in addressing myself to a person for whom I entertain the highest degree of esteem, and even veneration, and whose candour exceeds that of almost every other man, I choose to throw a few remarks upon your late *Sermons* into the form of *Letters to yourself*. A great part of the satisfaction I enjoy in this life, and especially that valuable portion of it which arises from my ardour (if I have any) in the pursuit of truth, I owe to my intercourse with you; an intercourse and friendship which has now been of long standing,† and which, if it be not my own fault, will never, I am persuaded, have any considerable interruption; but, after being the source of much happiness to me here, will continue to be so for ever.

Your diffidence with respect to conclusions, which you have formed with the greatest care, and after the most deliberate inquiry, I even think excessive; and it is the only thing, with respect to which I cannot say that I wish to resemble you; for I would not lose the satisfaction that arises from a persuasion of having found any valuable truth, nor willingly continue longer than is necessary in a state of *doubt*, than which nothing is more painful and distressing. Whether I have been too precipitate in forming my own judgment, especially with respect to the important question

* See *Advertisement*, prefixed to Dr. Price's "Sermons on the Christian Doctrine, as received by the different Denominations of Christians," 1787.

† See Vol. XV. p. 441.

that will be the subject of these *Letters*, is not for myself to determine. The time is fast approaching, with respect to both of us, when all uncertainty about it will be at an end; and when the source of our error, on whichever side it lies, will be laid open to us; and so as perhaps may be of some use to us in our farther progress in the pursuit of truth. In the mean time, the candour you express on the subject cannot but give me the greatest satisfaction. Speaking of the *Socinian* scheme, you say, "It maintains all that we need be anxious about in Christianity, and, consequently, the prejudices against it have no just foundation."*

With that candour and diffidence which distinguish all your writings, and to which all your friends are witnesses in your daily conversation, you say, with respect to the doctrine concerning the person of Christ, "I can in this instance, as in most others, with much more confidence say what is *not*, than what *is* the truth. The *Athanasian* or *Calvinistic* schemes of Christianity, I reject with strong conviction. The *Socinian* scheme also, on the two points which chiefly distinguish it, I find myself incapable of receiving."† Now since you cannot say that there are more than *three* opinions on the subject, and *two* of them are absolutely inadmissible by you, I should think that nothing could prevent your embracing *the third* with the greatest confidence and satisfaction. Such, at least, would be my own feelings in your circumstances, and such they are with respect to the conclusions which I draw from similar premises.

Your indifference about making proselytes is perfectly agreeable to your usual candour; but this I also think excessive. "I feel," you say, "no disposition to be very anxious about bringing you over to my opinion. The rage for proselytism is one of the curses of the world. I wish to make no proselytes except to candour, and charity, and honest inquiry."‡

If it be in the power of either precept or example to make such proselytes as *these*, you, Sir, cannot fail to have many; but in this case I must think that you exceed the just bounds of moderation. Our zeal to make proselytes ought, certainly, to be in proportion to our ideas of the importance of the truth for which we are advocates; and it is evident, that, notwithstanding your amiable candour with respect to us *Socinians*, or, as we rather choose to call ourselves, *Unitarians*, you think our tenets to be of dangerous consequence,

* *Sermons*, p. 72. (*P.*) † *Ibid.* p. 158. (*P.*) ‡ *Ibid.* (*P.*)

if Christianity itself be of any value; for you say, "It appears to me, that the doctrine of Christ's simple humanity, when viewed in connexion with the scripture account of his exaltation, implies an inconsistency and improbability which falls little short of an impossibility; and, consequently, that this doctrine not only renders the Scriptures *unitelligible*, but Christianity itself *incredible*."*

If, therefore, Christianity, and the belief of it, be of any importance, as no doubt you think them to be, you ought to wish and endeavour to make proselytes to that view of it, according to which alone you think it to be credible. I write so much as I do in defence of the opinion which you so strongly reprobate, because I see it in a very different light; not, indeed, as the only view in which Christianity is credible, (for I was a firm believer in it when I was an *Arian*, and even when I was an *Athanasian*,) but as that according to which it is by far the *most* credible. I now think the Athanasian doctrine to imply a direct contradiction, and the Arian hypothesis to be so improbable, as that it must greatly impede the reception of Christianity, especially with philosophical unbelievers. I profess to write with no other view than to make proselytes; nor, indeed, do I see that there can be any other rational object in writing at all.

With the greatest respect and affection,

I am, dear Friend,

Yours sincerely,

J. PRIESTLEY.

Birmingham, March 1, 1787.

* *Sermons*, p. 146. (*P.*) "The Scriptures," it is added, "tell us that Christ, after his resurrection, became Lord of the dead and living; that he had all power given him in heaven and earth; that angels were made subject to him; and that he is hereafter to raise all the dead, to judge the world, and to finish the scheme of the Divine moral government with respect to this earth, by conferring eternal happiness on all the virtuous, and punishing the wicked with *everlasting destruction*.

"Consider," proceeds Dr. Price, "whether such an elevation of a mere man is *credible*, or even *possible*. Can it be believed that a mere man could be advanced at once so high as to be above angels, and to be qualified to rule and judge this world? Does not this contradict all that we see, or can conceive of the order of God's works? Do not all beings rise gradually, one acquisition laying the foundation of another, and preparing for higher acquisitions?" *Ibid.* pp. 146, 147.

LETTER II.

Of the Nature and antecedent Probability of the Arian Hypothesis, with the Causes of Attachment to it.

DEAR FRIEND,

BEFORE I consider any of the *arguments* that you have produced in support of your hypothesis, I must take the liberty to consider what *it is*, and make some observations respecting its *antecedent probability*. For, to this must correspond the number and weight of the arguments that are necessary to support it. The *Arianism* that you maintain is not that of Dr. Clarke, but of a much lower kind; for you give it as your opinion, that by Christ "God made this world only, with its connexions and dependencies."* "Those learned men, therefore," you say, "seem to me to have gone much too far, who (though they deny Christ's equality to his God and our God) yet speak of him as a being who existed before *all worlds*, and as at the head of *all worlds*. This seems almost as little warranted by reason and Scripture as the doctrine which makes him the ONE SUPREME; and it makes the doctrine of his having humbled himself to death, even the death of the cross, to save this world, almost equally incredible."†

But whether we attend to the *words of Scripture*, which lead you to conclude that Christ made *this world*, or whether we attend to the necessary *connexions* and *dependencies* of this world, which you justly suppose to have had the same maker with it, it appears to me that we cannot help concluding that, if Christ made this world, he must also have made the sun, moon and stars, and, consequently, all worlds. For the apostle says, (*Col.* i. 16,) "By him were ALL things created,—visible and invisible;"‡ and certainly there are not more *conspicuous* objects in nature than the sun, moon, and stars. If, therefore, the apostle included, in his idea of *things visible*, the earth on which we live, he could not have excluded those heavenly bodies which are equally *visible*. Besides, what can be more express and definite in this respect, than that which *John* says of the *Logos*, which you suppose to be the same with Christ, *John* i. 3: "All things

* *Sermons*, p. 95. (*P.*)

† *Ibid.* p. 96. (*P.*)

‡ See Vol. XIV. p. 326.

were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made" ?*

You say, "This earth, with its inhabitants and connexions, includes all of nature that we have any concern with.—This observation is applicable to the account of the creation in the first chapter of Genesis; that account, most probably, being an account only of the creation of this earth, with its immediate dependencies."† But in that account, the most express mention is made of the creation of the sun, moon, and stars. Indeed, if we consider the *connexions* and *dependencies* of the earth, which you suppose to have been made by Christ, we must admit that the *moon*, at least, was also made by him, on account of its intimate connexion with, and dependence upon the earth; and if the moon, surely the *sun* also, on which they both depend for light and heat; and if the sun, the whole of the planetary system, including the newly-discovered *Georgium Sidus*, and all the *comets* which belong to the sun. And if the sun, with all that is connected with it, and depends upon it, was created by Christ, why should we not suppose that he made all that cluster, or *system of stars*, of which our sun is one; and if those stars, all the habitable worlds belonging to them?

In this manner I do not see how we can consistently stop till we include the whole universe, be the extent of it ever so great, or even infinite. So great is the *uniformity* in the system of nature, that we must pronounce it to be *one work*, and of course conclude that the author of it is *one*. This, indeed, is the proper argument for the unity of God on the light of nature, and this argument respects the immediate maker of the world, whoever that Being be.

Though you think that all the ancient *Arians*, and Dr. Clarke and others among the moderns, made too much of the rank that Christ holds in the creation, when they supposed him to have existed *before all worlds*, and to be *at the head of all worlds*, you do not seem to agree with those of the modern *Arians*, who maintain, that on his incarnation he was divested of all that power by which he made and governed the world; for you make his *wisdom* and his *miracles* to be proofs of his superior nature, which was also one of the arguments of the primitive fathers.

I cannot say but I wish you had been a little more explicit in giving us your sentiments on this subject; for whether he was thus divested or not, is a question that must be de-

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 10, 11.

† *Sermons*, p. 144. (*P.*)

cided one way or the other; and to me it appears that you have only the choice of *Scylla* or *Charybdis*. If you say, as the *Arians* in general now do, that while Christ was on earth he was divested of all his former power, it will follow, that, in the interval between his incarnation and resurrection, the whole system of the government of the world was changed; and besides, it will not be easy to conceive how, being reduced to the condition of a mere man, he could do any thing more than another mere man might have done.

On the other hand, if, as you seem to suppose, Christ retained all his original power, and by that power worked miracles, and raised himself from the dead, his humiliation, and especially his extreme dejection of mind during his agony in the garden, will be thought to be as extraordinary; for who can suppose that he, who was at that very time *supporting all things by the word of his power*, could not support himself, but needed the support of an angel, an angel that (as pertaining to this world) he himself had made, and was then supporting?

These things may not be properly *contradictions*, but they are things at which my mind revolts with no less force; so that I cannot help thinking, that it is for want of giving due attention to them that the minds of all men do not equally revolt at them.

That *mere divines* should talk so lightly as they sometimes do concerning *creation*, and the possibility of its falling within the province of an inferior being, I do not wonder; because they have no proper idea of what creation is, or implies. They have no conception of the magnitude of it, or of the wonderful extent of the laws by which the mundane system is governed. But you, Sir, are not a mere divine; you rank high in the class of mathematicians and natural philosophers, who are daily contemplating and making farther inquiries into the laws of nature; who are filled with astonishment at what they do see of them, and who are at the same time well satisfied that all they see bears no sensible proportion to that which is unknown.

Now, that a being possessing the profound wisdom and astonishing power that must have been necessary to the construction of such a system as this, (even allowing the *matter* out of which it was made to have been prepared for him,) should become a child in the womb of a woman, be born, be brought up from infancy to manhood, be subject to all the

pains and infirmities of men,* be delivered into the hands of his enemies, be crucified, and die, appears to me to be, in reality, no less incredible, than it does to you that the Creator of *all* worlds should be so degraded.

For, between that power which is equal to the construction of such a world as this, *with all its connexions and dependencies*, and that power which is equal to the formation of *all worlds*, we are not able to perceive any real difference. With respect to *our comprehension*, that difference must be merely nominal. The less is, to our perception, *infinite;* and after that, if we say that the other is *infinito—infinite*, the *idea* is the same; as in our ideas, an eternity *à parte post* makes no addition to the idea of eternity *à parte ante;* each of them exceeds any definite quantity, how great soever.

That you, Sir, therefore, who enter into these ideas much more readily than I can pretend to do, should so easily admit that of so great a degradation of your Maker, and for a purpose for which, as you must allow, it is impossible for us to conceive that it should be necessary, really astonishes me; and yet you are no less astonished that I should not adopt your views of this subject. Our readers must decide between us, and as to ourselves, our mutual wonder will only produce a friendly smile.

Your attachment to the *Arian* hypothesis is evidently owing, in a great measure, to your supposing it to have valuable *practical uses*. You admire the condescension of so great a Being as the Maker of the world and of all its dependencies, in becoming man, suffering and dying for us. "I often," you say, "feel myself deeply impressed by this consideration."† This I cannot call in question. But many pious *Trinitarians* are, I doubt not, more deeply impressed with the consideration of the supreme God becoming man, and then suffering and dying for us; and the consideration of Dr. Clarke's *Logos*, (before whom your diminutive *Logos* shrinks into nothing,) the great created Being who existed from all eternity, and who created not only this world, but all worlds, would, no doubt, impress *his* mind more forcibly and more favourably than your doctrine can impress yours.‡

* I do not say *other men*, for such a being as this, however degraded, would never be called *a man*, by any person who was acquainted with his natural rank. (*P.*)

† *Sermons*, p. 155. (*P.*)

‡ "On other accounts, it" (viz. the example of Christ) "is more forcible in proportion to his superiority; and this is true in particular of his condescension, humi-

There is not, indeed, any doctrine in the *Calvinistic* or the *Popish* system, but what the advocates for them will maintain to have excellent practical uses. With what unspeakable reverence and devotion do the Catholics eat their Maker! But is this any reason why we Protestants should embrace their opinions?

We find sufficient sources of gratitude and devotion in a purer system of Christianity, and so shall we do in passing from *Trinitarianism* to *high Arianism*, from this to your *low Arianism*, and from this to *Socinianism*, even of the lowest kind, in which Christ is considered as a mere man, the son of Joseph and Mary, and naturally as fallible and peccable as Moses, or any other prophet. I have myself gone through all these changes, and I think I may assure you, that you have nothing to apprehend from any part of the progress. In every stage of it you have that consideration on which the Scriptures always lay the greatest stress, as a motive to gratitude and obedience, viz. the love of God, the almighty Parent, in giving his son to die for us. And whether this son be man, angel, or of a superangelic nature, every thing that he has done is to be referred to the *love of God*, the original author of all, and to him all our gratitude and obedience is ultimately due.

Far would I be from detracting from the merit of Christ, or the value of his example, which I would endeavour to keep in view; but, as a veneration for him should be checked when it would lead us to ascribe to him *divine honours*, so, in any other respect, should we be careful how we give to him any part of that *glory which his God and Father will not give to another.*

Now *Arians*, besides placing Christ in a department which belongs to God only, when they make him the creator of the world, ascribe too much to him when they suppose, or seem to suppose, that it was in consequence of his *own proposal* that he became incarnate, and undertook the scheme of our redemption. You, Sir, have not asserted this; but what you say on the subject has little force on any other idea. Having spoken of the "pre-existent dignity" of Christ, and of his "degrading himself to the condition of a mortal man," you say, "This is an instance of benevolence to which we can conceive no parallel; which is probably the admiration of angels," &c.*

lity, meekness, and patience under sufferings. The greater he was, the more we are obliged to admire these virtues in him, and the more we must be excited to practise them." *Sermons*, p. 153. (*P.*)

* *Ibid.* pp. 153, 154. (*P.*)

Whatever might be the degradation of this exalted Being, if it was done at the express command of God, which he must have been sensible he had no right or power to disobey, there could be no greater merit in it than in the obedience of a man to the known command of the same Lord of all. To do this readily and cheerfully, is all the merit that created beings can pretend to.

Our Saviour's own language never gives us any idea of his services to mankind, but as what he undertook in consequence of the command of God; as *John* vii. 28: "Then cried Jesus in the Temple, as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am:* and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not." Such is the uniform language of our Saviour, whenever he speaks of his mission; and it suggests no other idea than that of any prophet having received a commission from God, and cheerfully undertaking the execution of it.

In the idea of the merit of Christ's incarnation, as well as in other respects, there is too much of the proper *Trinitarian* doctrine in the scheme of *Arianism*, which rose after it, and out of it. In ancient Arianism there was no difference in the two systems but that between a *created* and an *uncreated logos*. The *office* assigned to them was the very same. Modern Arians are by degrees dropping many articles in the ancient Arian creed; but it appears to me that, in doing this, they make a scheme much less consistent with itself, with reason, or with the Scriptures.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

Of the Creation of Matter by the Father, and the Formation of it by the Son; and other Considerations attending the Idea of a finite and imperfect Creator.

Dear Friend,

It is another part of your hypothesis that *creation out of nothing* is the prerogative of the Supreme Being, and that Christ only employed the matter which he found already produced, in the construction of the world. "The formation of this world by Christ does not," you say, "imply *creation from nothing;* that probably being peculiar to Almighty Power, but only an arrangement of things into

* Rather *interrogatively*. See Vol. XIII. pp. 212, 213.

their present order, and the establishment of that course of nature to which we are witnesses."*

Now I do not see why we should distinguish the provinces of the *created creator*, and of the *uncreated creator*, in this manner. What could *matter* be when it was first produced out of nothing? If it had the necessary properties of matter, you must suppose it to have been *extended* and *impenetrable*. For you will say that without these properties, matter would be nothing at all; and if it had impenetrability, it must have had a firm cohesion of its parts, which implies a power of *attraction* in the particles of which it consists; and if this fresh created matter did not immediately coalesce into one mass, or if there were any *pores* in it, the particles of it must have been endued with a *repulsive*, as well as an *attractive* power.

Again, if matter, as first produced, had necessarily the powers of attraction and repulsion, why not all that variety of attractions and repulsions which constitute all the different kinds of bodies? But if simple attraction and repulsion only be admitted, we must admit some *form* and *arrangement*, and therefore we cannot confine the exertions of the Supreme Being to the mere creation of matter.

Besides, can any reason be imagined why the same great Being, who with infinite ease produced matter itself, should not, with the same ease, have produced it with all that *variety*, and all that *arrangement*, which constitute the visible system of the universe? The whole must have been equally easy to Almighty Power; and the uniformity of the system would certainly be better secured in this manner, than by committing it to the discretion, and consequently to the indiscretion, of inferior, and therefore imperfect, agents. To me, I own, there appears something so strange in the supposition of the Supreme Being having created *mere matter*, and of Christ having made this mere matter into a world, or worlds; it is so destitute of all probability either from appearances in nature, or the language of Scripture, that I can hardly think it deserves a serious refutation.

As to the language of *the Scriptures*, it seems to me to be absolutely inconsistent with this *hypothesis*. According to *Moses*, the same great Being who made the heavens and the earth, made also the *light*, separated the waters from the earth, and made all the plants and animals with which they

* *Sermons*, p. 144. (*P.*)

are both furnished; and no mention is made of any other, being concerned in the production of any thing, or in the government of the world, when it was made.

According to your *hypothesis*, the Supreme Being made nothing more than the *earth*, or *dust of the ground*, as it is called, (if his province extended even so far as that,) but the person who actually formed *man*, and who made the difference of sexes, was Christ. But how does this agree with what Christ himself says, *Mark* x. 6, "From the beginning of the creation, God made them, male and female"? You do not suppose that by the term God, he here meant himself; nor will you say, with Chrysostom, that Christ did not choose to intimate that himself was the maker of man, lest it should give offence to the Jews. You must, therefore, admit, that the Supreme Being is here spoken of as the Maker of the human race; and similar to this is the uniform language of Scripture, so that nothing can authorize us to depart from the plain sense of it.

The *Psalmist* had no idea of any intermediate governor of the world when he said, (*Psalm* civ. 21,) "The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God;" or our Saviour, when he said, (*Matt.* vi. 26,) "Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them."

There is another puzzling circumstance attending your *hypothesis* of a proper *creation* by the Father, and of the *formation* of things only by the Son, which is that part of the scheme which relates to *spirit*. For, besides *material substance*, of which the earth, &c. consists, you suppose that there is also a derived *immaterial substance*. Was this, as well as the former, *created* by the almighty power of the Father, and afterwards *formed* into angels, and the souls of men, by Christ? This is a question that arises from your general hypothesis, which requires to be considered; and the discussion of which may occasion some embarrassment to your scheme.

If the instrumentality of Christ in making the world was of the same nature with that by which he raised the dead, and worked his other miracles, (as to which we are assured, that not himself, but *the Father within him, did the works,)* there could be no occasion for a Being of power superior even to that of man. In this sense *Adam*, immediately after being created himself, might have been as good a creator as either your *Logos*, or that of Dr. Clarke. But then this would be no proper instrumentality at all.

This kind of an intermediate creator cannot, therefore, be supposed. He must have had powers equal to the work; and if, as you justly observe, all finite beings attain perfection by degrees,* the Maker of this world must first have produced something less perfect. But what evidence is there of the existence of any such less perfect production? Shall we look for this first *essay at creation* in a state of the earth prior to that of which *Moses* gives us an account? And when this earth shall be destroyed, will the Maker of it be so far improved by experience, as to be able to new-model it into a better form, so that the evils which, through want of skill in the Creator, could not be excluded at present, will be excluded hereafter.

But though this *finite creator* should be ever so much improved by observation and experience, still his work, being the production of an *imperfect being*, must be imperfect; and while the reign of Christ continues, we can never hope to be under the conduct of a Being of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, as long as we exist.

Is it possible that such a notion as this, perfectly consonant to the *Arian* hypothesis, should be contemplated with pleasure? It gives me unspeakably more satisfaction to consider the present system as the best possible; being the immediate production of a Being of infinite wisdom, and that even the *evils* of which we complain are necessary parts of this best possible constitution of things.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

Considerations relating to the Origin and History of the Arian Doctrine. Of Christ not being the Object of Prayer, and of the Claim of Arians to the Appellation of Unitarians.

Dear Friend,

You cannot say that Christ himself ever dropped any hint that he was either the maker or the governor of the world; and, as I have argued at large, in my controversy with Dr. Horsley,† and in my "History of Early Opinions concerning Christ," if the apostles had, at any time, been informed of the truth of a doctrine, which they could never

* "Do not all beings rise gradually, one acquisition laying the foundation of another, and preparing for higher acquisitions?" *Sermons*, p. 147. (*P.*) *Supra*, p. 372, *Note, ad fin.*

† *Supra*, pp. 213—221.

have learned from the Scriptures of the *Old Testament*, (in which nothing is said of *the Messiah* being the maker of the world,) a doctrine of which they could have had no suspicion from any thing that they observed while they lived and conversed with Christ, we must have perceived some traces of it in their history. It was a *new idea*, and of such great magnitude, and so distinguishingly honourable to their Master, compared with Moses, or any of the preceding prophets, as must have excited the greatest astonishment in both the friends and the enemies of Christianity.

It was an opinion at which the minds of all *Jews* must have exceedingly revolted, and therefore would have required to have been largely insisted upon, and copiously defended, even much more than the doctrine of the admission of Gentile converts into the Christian church, without conformity to the institutions of *Moses;* so that we should not have been left, as we now are, to infer this extraordinary doctrine from two or three expressions in casual epistles.

I have also shewn that the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ, how incredible soever you may think it makes the gospel to be, was that alone which was received by the great body of the primitive Christians, both *Jews* and *Gentiles.** They were in possession of the books of the *New Testament*, and for their use they were written, and yet they saw in them no such doctrine as that of the creation of the world by Christ, or even that of his pre-existence. I have also proved, (as I must be allowed to say till I see it disproved,) that the doctrine of the world being made by a created being was (if we except the *Gnostics)* absolutely unknown in the Christian church till the time of *Arius*. Also, the acknowledgments of *Athanasius*,† and of all the orthodox fathers of the church, imply nothing less than the general prevalence of the doctrine of the *simple humanity* of Christ, and by no means that of his pre-existence, or superangelic nature. How, then, can that be received as the doctrine of the Scriptures which was never understood to be so for so long a period ?

I have likewise shewn that, till the same period, all the learned Christians supposed that Christ had a proper *human soul*, besides the *Logos* that was united to him, and that this *Logos* (by which they supposed the world to have been made) had been an essential attribute of God the Father, a system fundamentally different from that of *Arianism*. It

* *Supra*, pp. 200—203, 221, 222. † *Ibid.* pp. 70—77, 200, 205.

must, therefore, require the most express evidence from the Scriptures, to prove *from them* the truth of a doctrine unsupported by any appearance in nature, and that was not discovered to be contained in the Scriptures of the *Old* or *New Testament*, till three hundred years after Christ.

Another part of the ancient *Arian* hypothesis, viz. that of Christ having been the person by whom the Supreme God had intercourse with the *Patriarchs*, you disclaim; justly thinking it to be expressly contradicted in the first verse of the epistle to the *Hebrews*.* But the separation of two such old and intimate friends, as this opinion and that of Christ having made the world, is, I think, not a little hazardous with respect to them both. And surely it might naturally be expected, that if Christ be that Being who made the world, who, of course, supported it by his power, and who at length became incarnate in it, and died for it, he would be the proper medium of all the divine intercourse with it. Can it be supposed that the Maker of men had nothing to do with them from their creation to the time of their redemption?

You also reject another part of the ancient *Arian* hypothesis concerning Christ, viz. that he is the proper object of prayer. And yet it is so natural that the Maker and Preserver of men, and of the world, should be the object of prayer, that, in my opinion, nothing could have prevented the practice, but some very express prohibition to worship him, which we no where find in the Scriptures. It is only the idea of Christ not being present with us, together with its not being in his power to help us, that can make him, or any other being, not to be the proper object of prayer to us. For there cannot be any thing unreasonable in our asking of any being a favour which it is in his power to grant, provided he be accessible to us.

You say of the Father, "There is no other being concerning whom we have sufficient reason to think that he is continually present with us, and a witness to all our thoughts and desires. There is, therefore, no other being to whom our prayers ought to be directed."† But surely the Being who made, and who preserves us, he *in whom all things consist*, whether he be *finite* or *infinite*, must always be present with us, and must have it in his power to grant all the petitions that we ever address to God.

It is simply under the character of God being *the Lord*

* See *supra*, pp. 343, 344. † *Sermons*, p. 97. (*P.*)

our Maker, that the Scriptures teach us to *worship and bow down* before him. Whatever being, therefore, comes under the description of *the Lord our Maker*, we are authorized to worship and bow down to him; and as, according to you, Christ is that Being, you must be abundantly justified in making him the object of your prayers. To be the Lord our Maker, and the object of prayer, are so naturally and necessarily connected, that if, by any argument whatever, it can be proved that Christ is either not the one, or not the other, it must follow that he cannot be either of them.

Moreover, all the ancient *Arians* allowed Christ the appellation of *God*, and indeed you do the same, when you apply to him what is said of the *Logos* in the introduction to the gospel of *John;* for that *Logos* is expressly said to be *God*, and has the attributes of the God described by Moses, viz. *the maker of all things that are made.* It is, therefore, no such God as *Moses* himself is called with respect to *Pharoah*, or as any magistrate may be called. You make him to be a God both in *name* and in *power.* It appears to me, therefore, not a little extraordinary, that you should claim the title of *Unitarians*, when all that you can with propriety say is, that, though you acknowledge *two Gods*, one of them only is the object of prayer, and to be worshipped, and the other, though your maker, and constant preserver, yet, for some unknown reason, is not the object of prayer, or to be worshipped.

Your definition of the word *Unitarian*, appears to me to be quite arbitrary, and unnecessarily complex. "By *Unitarians*," you say, "I mean those Christians who believe there is but one God, and one object of religious worship; and that this one God is the *Father* only, and not a Trinity, consisting of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. An Unitarian, therefore," you add, "may, or may not, be a believer in Christ's pre-existence."*

But I should think that the only natural and simple definition of an *Unitarian* should be, *a believer in one God*, or one person, properly entitled to the appellation of God, whether he was an object of religious worship, or not; which is another and independent circumstance. If a person not concerned in this controversy were asked to give his opinion, I should imagine that, if he made any addition to this definition, he would say, that an Unitarian was a believer in *one God*, or *one Being concerned in the creation*

* *Sermons*, p. 69, *Note.* (*P.*)

and care of the world. And even this is rising higher in the definition of the powers of *Godhead* than the ancient Heathens, who were properly and professedly Polytheists, ever did.

You say, that "an Unitarian may, or may not, be a believer in Christ's pre-existence," and very justly, if you mean that he pre-existed as an *angel* or *arch-angel*, and if you can assign him any department similar to theirs. But I really cannot help considering *Arians* as believing in *two Gods*, while they hold that Christ, though a created being himself, had for his department the formation of this world, the adjustment of all the laws to which it is subject, and of course the constant care and government of the whole, *supporting it by the word of his power.* And, that the great Being to whom this description belongs should not be the object of prayer is to me incomprehensible. If I thought there really was any such derived Being, always present with me, who planned all the events of my life, and whose power continually supported me, I could hardly resist the impulse to pray to him.

Lastly, if according to your definition, the one God must be *the Father only*, and they are not *Unitarians* who do not make him the sole object of religious worship, how will you class the *Moravians*, who address no prayers to him, but to the Son only? Will you say that they are worshippers of no God at all? They might even become *Arians*, and continue their practice of praying to Christ only. All the ancient Arians prayed to him.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

Of the Proof from the Scriptures of the Creation of the World by Christ.

DEAR FRIEND,

SURELY such an *hypothesis* as yours, viz. that of a great pre-existent created Being, *the creator of this world, with all its connexions and dependencies,** and yet not the object of prayer; a Being which, it must be acknowledged, no appearance in nature would ever have suggested to us, of which we have no account in any part of the *Old Testament*, (though we are there informed concerning the creation of all

* See *supra*, p. 373.

things,) an hypothesis which was unknown to all Christians, learned and unlearned, till the time of *Arius*, requires some very satisfactory evidence; and if all the proofs be from *scripture*, those proofs ought to be very *numerous* as well as very *clear*. You ought also to be able to give some good reason why the Scriptures were not understood to teach this extraordinary doctrine for so many centuries, by those who must have been the best acquainted with the language in which they are written.

Now there are not, in reality, more than two passages, in which Christ is, in any sense, said to have *created* any thing, and these are not in any *historical work*, but only incidental expressions in the epistles of *Paul*, viz. *Eph.* iii. 9, "Who created all things by Jesus Christ,"* and, *Col.* i. 16—20, "By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth; visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers. All things were created by him, and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist; and he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."†

As to the introduction to the gospel of *John*, it is not there said that any thing was made by *Christ*, but only by the *Logos*, which we maintain to be *the word* or *power of God*, which, as it were, resided in Christ, to which he ascribed all the miracles that he wrought, and which there can be no doubt *did* make all things. In *Heb.* i. 2, it is not said that *the worlds*, but that *the ages* were made by Christ;‡ so that something must be meant by the phrase, very different from proper *creation*.

Without entering into a large examination of the two passages above-mentioned, in which *creation*, in some sense or other, is ascribed to Christ, I would only observe, that neither the earth, nor the sun, moon, or stars, nor any material substance, is specified among the things created by him. In the former it is *all things*, in general, which is quite indefinite; and in the latter, in which the things

* See Vol. XIV. p. 272.
† See *ibid.* pp. 326, 327.
‡ See *ibid.* p. 347.

created by him are enumerated, we only find *thrones*, *dominions*, &c., by the creation of which may be intended some exercise of that *power* and authority which was given to Christ after his resurrection.

That this was the whole meaning of the apostle is pretty evident from two circumstances; first, that this enumeration of things created by him, and consisting in him, closes with the mention of his being *the head of the body, the church*, as if that was intended to comprehend all the preceding particulars. Secondly, as in the former part of the passage, all things that are in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, are said to be *created* by Christ, in the latter part of it all things in heaven and in earth, are said to be *reconciled* by him; so that those two expressions *created* and *reconciled*, may well be supposed to be synonymous to each other, and to be descriptive of the *new creation* or *renovation* of the world by Christianity. And this is the more probable, from the apostle's enlarging on this idea in the verses immediately following those quoted above: "And you, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your minds, by wicked works, yet now he hath reconciled," &c.*

Had the term *creation* never been applied in the Scriptures to any thing but the creation of material things, there would have been some plausibility in your argument from these two texts; but you know it is very usual with the sacred writers to describe the *renovation* of things by this term, and especially that great and happy change in the system of human affairs which was brought about by the gospel. This use of the term *creation* in the *New Testament*, seems to have been borrowed from the same use of it in the *Old*, and especially in *Is.* lxv. 17, 18: "For, behold I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad, and rejoice for ever in that which I create. For, behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy."† In this figurative language, it is evident, that the prophet describes the new and happy state of things which is to take place *in the latter days*, when the Jews will be restored to their own country, and Jerusalem, here said to be *created*, will be *rebuilt* with great splendour.‡

There are a variety of passages in which the term creation is evidently used in this secondary sense in the *New*

* See, on *Col.* i. 20—23, Vol. XIV. p. 327.
† See Bishop Lowth's *translation*, Vol. XII. p. 422.
‡ See *Le Cene* in *ibid.* p. 208, *Note* ¶.

Testament, as 2 *Cor.* v. 17: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;"* *Gal.* vi. 15: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature;" *Eph.* ii. 10: "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."†

The very same word which is used when things are said to be *created* by Christ, is even applied to human institutions; as in 1 *Pet.* ii. 13: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man," (πασῃ ἀνθρωπινῃ κτισει,) *every creation of man;* and it is remarkable that the creation which is ascribed to Christ in the epistle to the *Colossians*, is of the same nature with this which is here ascribed to men, viz. that of *dominions*, *principalities*, *and powers.*

Now, since it is most evident that the term *creation* is used in two senses, the one literal, and the other figurative, you ought not to determine the application of it, in any particular passage, to either of them, without a reason; and since the creation of the heavens and the earth, whenever they are expressly mentioned, is constantly ascribed to God the Father; and the *figurative creation* only, where *that* is evidently intended, to Christ, we are certainly not authorized to ascribe to him any other creation than the latter, in any passage in which the expression is indefinite. If this be not a natural and just rule of interpretation, I am not acquainted with any that ought to be called such; and this clearly gives the creation of the world to the Father, and not to Christ.

After reciting those passages which you think prove that the apostles considered Christ as the maker of the world, but without any notice of the *Socinian* interpretations of them, you say, "It is a circumstance a little discouraging, in reciting this evidence from scripture, that some modern *Socinians* would not be convinced by it, were it ever so clear and decisive."‡ Then, mentioning my name with a degree of respect§ to which I cannot think myself entitled, you say, "He intimates, that had this been the opinion of the apostles we should not be bound to receive it."‖

Now, unless you believe the plenary and universal inspiration of the apostles, which you will not pretend to do, I do not see why you should be at all staggered at this. Suppose any of the apostles had incidently spoken of the

* See Vol. XIV. p. 169. † See *ibid.* pp. 268, 269.

‡ *Sermons*, pp. 141, 142, *Note.* (*P.*)

§ As "a highly valued friend, and one of the most distinguished writers of the present times." *Ibid.* p. 142.

‖ *Ibid.* (*P.*)

sun and stars revolving round the earth, (which, if they had given any opinion on the subject, they probably would,) should you have subscribed to it? You would have said, that such an opinion had no connexion with their proper commission. Shew, then, the *necessary connexion* (for of *imaginary* and *remote* connexions there is no end) between any thing in, or belonging to, the commission of the apostles, "Go,—and teach all nations," &c.,* and the doctrine of the making of the world by Christ. It certainly was not *necessary* that he who came to *redeem* the world, (whatever you mean by that term,) should have *created* it also.

As I have observed before, you cannot say that Christ himself ever dropped the most distant hint of his having been the maker of the world. Nay, the contrary, as I have shewn, is implied in what he said. We ought, therefore, to have very good and clear evidence, to think that the apostles meant not only to *advance* so much above what had been taught by their Master, but really to teach a contrary doctrine.

Had I been living in the age of the apostles, and heard any of them advance such an opinion, I think I should have taken the liberty to ask their authority for it. The Jews, who looked to the prophets for the character and office of the *Messiah*, where they saw nothing of the kind, might well have said to any of them who should have taught such a doctrine as this, *Thou bringest strange things to our ears.* That such a remark does not appear to have been made, amounts, in my opinion, to a proof that no such doctrine was taught.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

Of the Argument for the pre-existent Dignity of Christ from his working Miracles.

DEAR FRIEND,

I SHALL now drop the consideration of Christ having been the creator of the world, and attend to what you have said of his *pre-existent dignity* in general. Among other proofs of this, you say, "The history of our Saviour, as given in the New Testament, and the events of his life and ministry, answer best to the opinion of the superiority of his nature;" and among other particulars, you enumerate "the

* *Matt.* xxviii. 19. See *Lardner*, quoted Vol. XIII., p. 385, *Note* †.

wisdom which discovered itself in his doctrine, and by which he spoke as never man spoke; that knowledge of the hearts of men, by which he could speak to their thoughts, as we do to one another's words;" and "those miraculous powers by which, with a command over nature like that which first produced it, he ordered tempests to cease, and gave eyes to the blind, limbs to the maimed, reason to the frantic, health to the sick, and life to the dead."*

These instances of wisdom and power would indeed be a proof of a nature superior to man, if in any proper sense this wisdom and power could be said to be *his own*, or to belong to him, as the powers of walking and speaking belong to men in general, powers which we can exert whenever we please. But the reverse of this is most clearly asserted by our Lord himself, *John* xiv. 10: "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."†

This is indeed fully acknowledged by yourself in your *Sermon* on "the resurrection of Lazarus," where you say, "The manner in which he refers this miracle to the will and power of God, requires our attention. After the stone was taken away, he made, we are told, a solemn address to God; and, lifting up his eyes, said, *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.* This implies that his ability to work this miracle was the consequence of his having prayed for it. Throughout his whole ministry, he was careful to direct the regards of men to the Deity, as the fountain of all his powers. His language was, *The Father who dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. I can of mine own self do nothing. I came to do the will of him that sent me.*"‡ This is very ingenuous, but surely not very consistent with your inferring the super-human nature of Christ from his miracles, which, according to your own account, might have been wrought by any man, equally aided by God.

The persons who saw the miracles of Christ, and who must have been as good judges in the case as we can pretend to be, never inferred from them that he was, *in himself*, of a nature superior to man, but only that *God was with him*, and acted by him, as he had done by *Moses*. Among others, *Nicodemus* says, (*John* iii. 2,) "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God. For no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." After

* *Sermons*, pp. 124, 125. (*P.*)
† See Vol. XIII. pp. 314, 315.
‡ *Sermons*, pp. 330, 331. (*P.*)

he had cured a person sick of the palsy at *Capernaum*, we read, *Matt.* ix. 8, "When the multitude saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, *who* had given such power unto men."* After the cure of the *demoniac*, on the descent of Christ from the Mount of Transfiguration, (*Luke* ix. 43,) it is said, "They were all amazed at the mighty power of God." And after his raising the widow's son to life, it is said, (*Luke* vii. 16,) "And there came a fear on all, and they glorified God, saying, that a great prophet is risen up among us, and that God had visited his people;"† meaning, no doubt, as he had done the *Israelites* in *Egypt*, by sending *Moses* to them.

Besides, I do not see how your argument for the superior nature of Christ from his miracles is consistent with what you say of the suspension of his powers. "That humiliation of Christ, and suspension of his powers, which is implied in his being made a man, and growing up from infancy to mature age, subject to all our wants and sorrows, is indeed, as to the manner of it, entirely incomprehensible to us."‡

But perhaps your idea was, that his natural powers were suspended only from the time of his incarnation to that of his public ministry; when the full exercise of them was restored to him, so that he wrought his miracles with no more particular assistance than I have in writing this book. But such a temporary suspension and restoration of his powers is a mere arbitrary supposition, without any foundation in the history, or rather in contradiction to all those passages that imply the immediate agency of the Father in the miracles of Christ. There is also, in this case, a difficulty which I have mentioned before, and to which you do not seem to have given sufficient attention, viz. that in this interval of thirty years, the government of the world was in different hands, and yet without any change being, I presume, perceived in the conduct of it.

I am, &c.

* See Vol. XIII. p. 103. Mr. Lindsey justifies the opinion that our Lord was not "of a nature superior to man" by the following, among other passages from "St. Luke, treating of the things that happened after Christ's resurrection;" from which "it is demonstrable" that the Evangelist "looked upon Jesus to be one of the human race."

Mr. L. instances *Acts* ii. 22, where "Peter expressly calls Jesus *a man*, of Nazareth, who had received high extraordinary powers from Almighty God;" xiii. 23, where "Paul represents Jesus, as a man of David's family;" xvii. 24, 31, where he "calls him expressly *a man* appointed to an important office under God that made the world;" xxii. 8, where "Christ, in his highest exaltation, calls himself *Jesus of Nazareth*, that is, the man of Nazareth." *Two Dissertations*, 1779, pp. 28, 29.

† See Vol. XIII. pp. 96, 97. ‡ *Sermons*, p. 140, *Note*. (*P.*)

LETTER VII.

Of the Argument for the pre-existent Dignity of Christ, from his being supposed to have raised himself from the Dead, and from his voluntarily dismissing his Spirit when he died.

DEAR FRIEND,

" Another fact," you say, " of the same kind" (viz. which proves his nature to be superior to that of man) " is his raising *himself* from the dead. This he seems to have intimated, when he says to the Jews, *Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again.* But more expressly in John x. 17, 18: *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.* In all other places GOD is said to have raised Christ from the dead; and these words inform us how this is to be understood. God raised Christ from the dead by giving him a power to raise *himself* from the dead, and not only himself, but all the world."*

But can you suppose that, if every thing which exceeded the power of an ordinary man that was *seemingly* done by Christ, was not *really* done by him, but by God who was with him, while he was *alive*, the case was not the same with every thing that respected him when he was *dead?* Or can you imagine that, if the apostles had *understood* him to mean what you do, in the expressions above quoted, they would not have made the greatest account of the circumstance, and have expressed it in the clearest terms *after his resurrection*, as a proof of his pre-existent dignity and superior nature? But, as you acknowledge, " in all other places GOD is said to have raised Christ from the dead;" and though the resurrection of Christ is frequently mentioned by them, there does not occur a single expression, in all their preaching or writing, that, by any mode of construction, can be interpreted into an intimation that they had the idea of his having raised himself from the dead. It is plain therefore, that his disciples did not understand him to mean what you do in the expressions you have quoted.

Besides, the expressions which you have quoted, easily admit of another interpretation; whereas, in the num-

* *Sermons*, pp. 128—131. (*P.*)

berless passages in which God is said to have raised Christ from the dead, the language is plain, so as to give no suspicion of one thing being said, and another thing being intended. And surely we ought to interpret what is less intelligible by what is more so, and not that which is more intelligible by that which is less so, which is the rule which you have followed.

But let us interpret the language that Christ used, by itself. He says, *I have power to lay down my life*, and *I have power to take it again*.* If, therefore, the latter power was voluntary, and exerted at his own pleasure, so was the former. But did Christ die, that is, expire on the cross, by any proper act of his own, and not as the natural consequence of his crucifixion? This is very far from any thing that is said, or that is intimated, by the historians; and, if it had been the fact, would have reflected the greatest dishonour upon him, and must have had a very bad effect with respect to his example in suffering; as it would have been said, that he exerted a power to shorten his sufferings, of which his followers were not possessed. And the natural suspicion would have been, that by the same power by which he shortened his sufferings (putting a period to his own life, and thereby certainly authorizing suicide) he prevented the natural effect of scourging and crucifixion, so as to have felt no pain at all in the whole of the transaction. Far be such thoughts as these from those who profess to respect and honour Christ, as the *author of their faith*, and the pattern they propose to follow.

You seem, however, to have adopted this idea of Christ having voluntarily dismissed his spirit, strange as it appears to me, equally dishonourable to Christ, and unfriendly to the gospel. For you say, "After hanging on the cross a sufficient time, and crying with a loud voice, *It is finished*, he bowed his head, and dismissed his spirit (παρεδωκε το πνευμα). This was dying as no one ever died. It verified his declaration, that *no one took his life from him, but that he gave it up of himself*."†

On this subject, which is of some importance, I wish to make a few observations.

1. Had it been the real opinion of the writers of the gospel history, that Christ voluntarily dismissed his own spirit, and did not die as other men do, by the exhausting of what may be called the *vital powers*, they would *all of them*,

* See, on *John* x. 18, Vol. XIII. p. 234. † *Sermons*, p. 126, *Note*. (*P.*)

have expressed themselves so clearly, as to have put the matter out of doubt. The thing was so new, and so extraordinary, that none of them would have contented himself with describing the fact, in such language as could have led any one to conclude that he *might* have died as other men did. But both *Mark* and *Luke*, describing the death of Christ, simply say εξεπνευσε, *he expired*, or *breathed his last*, though *Matthew* says, αφηκε το πνευμα, and *John*, whom you quote, says παρεδωκε το πνευμα.*

2. Had you looked into *Wetstein* on *Matt.* xxvii. 49, you would have found four examples of natural deaths being described by Heathen writers, in the same manner as the death of Christ is described by *Matthew* and *John*. *Euripides* uses the very same phrase with *Matthew*, αφηκε το πνευμα. In two of *Ælian*, and one of *Herodotus*, we have αφηκε την ψυχην. In the *Septuagint*, (*Gen.* xxxv. 18,) the death of *Rachel* is described in the same manner, εν τω αφιεναι αυτην την ψυχην, literally, *when she dismissed her soul*. How, then, can any stress be laid on this phraseology? How does it prove that no one died as Christ did?

3. I would farther observe, that if the connexion between the body and soul of Christ was of the same nature with that which subsists between the bodies and souls of other men, (and as his pre-existent spirit is supposed to have supplied the place of a proper human soul, one would imagine that the connexion must have been of the same nature,) its agency upon the body must, according to your idea, have ceased at death.

On the whole, therefore, we are abundantly authorized to interpret the very few expressions on which you lay so much stress, agreeably to the plain and uniform tenor of scripture, (according to which Christ was raised from the dead by the power of God his Father, and not by any power of his own,) as only importing his voluntary acceptance of the part that he acted in life, with a view to the reward that he was to have for it, voluntarily submitting to be put to death, in order to be raised again. And I conclude, that what he said of *no man having power to take his life from him*, is best explained by his declaration, that he could have prayed to the Father, who would have sent him legions of angels to rescue him, and not by his manner of expiring on the cross.

Stress has been laid on the circumstance of Christ *crying*

* See Vol. XIII. p. 361.

with a loud voice immediately before he expired, and on *Pilate's* wondering that he should have been so soon dead. But what Christ had previously suffered in his agony in the garden should be taken into consideration. Such distress of mind as he must have felt, (probably through a great part of the night, which he passed without sleep,) and which produced great *drops of sweat falling to the ground*, (even though they should be supposed not to have been *drops of blood,)* must have exhausted him very much. Such terror of mind as this has been known, of itself, to occasion death. No wonder then, that Christ was not able to carry his cross, and that he expired before the two thieves. As to the *loudness of his cry*, nothing is more common than great exertions of any kind before death, and they contribute to hasten death, by exhausting the vital powers.*

When you shall have considered all these circumstances, I flatter myself that you will see sufficient reason to be satisfied that Christ did not accelerate his own death. To think that he died *naturally*, and as other men do, in and by torture, is infinitely more honourable to him, and more favourable to Christianity, though less favourable to your peculiar opinion concerning the *pre-existent dignity* of his nature. And if the phrase *power to take away his life*, does not mean a voluntary power of putting an end to it, the corresponding phrase, *power to take it again*, cannot be construed to imply a power of raising himself from the dead.

I am, &c.

LETTER VIII.

Of the Argument for the pre-existent Dignity of Christ from particular Passages of Scripture supposed to assert, or to imply it.

DEAR FRIEND,

I AM rather surprised that you should lay any stress on Christ's praying for *the glory which he had with God before the world was*,† when this is so naturally interpreted of the glory that was *intended* him before the world was. This glory was evidently the reward of what he did *in the world*, and not of any thing that he did before he came into it. *John* xvii. 4, 5: "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now,

* See Vol. XIII. p. 361. † *Sermons*, p. 133. (*P.*)

O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

Besides, how unnatural must it be to suppose that Christ could have any occasion to pray for a degree of glory of which he was possessed before he came into the world, when the part that he had acted in it would naturally entitle him to something more! As we are assured he was *exalted*, so, no doubt, he knew the Divine intention, and may be supposed to have had that exaltation in view in the *glory* for which he prayed.

If we must interpret the language of scripture in an absolutely literal manner, we must admit, as I have shewn in some of the former letters, not only that Christ *existed*, but also that he was *slain* before the foundation of the world; and not only that *he* had glory, but also that *we* had glory with him before the world began.*

You make it an argument for the pre-existent dignity of Christ, that Paul says, 2 *Cor.* viii. 9, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich."† "When," you say, "did our Lord possess riches? When did he exchange riches for poverty, in order to make us rich? In this world, he was always poor and persecuted."‡ But may not a man be said to be rich, who has the power of being so, or is supposed to have that power? Now *Martha* says to Christ, *John* xi. 22, "I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee;" and he himself said, when he was apprehended, that he could have prayed to his Father, and that thereupon he would have sent him legions of angels to rescue him. Was not this to be *rich* and *powerful?* And might not his declining the actual possession of riches and power which were within his reach, be called his *becoming poor?*

But you say, "In my opinion, the most decisive text of all is that in Phil. ii. 5: *Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ, who,*" as you properly translate it, "*being in the form of God, did not covet to be honoured as God; but divested himself, and took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself to death, even the death of the cross.*"§

* See, on *John* xvii. 5, Vol. XIII. p. 333. † See Vol. XIV. pp. 177, 178.

‡ *Sermons*, p. 137. (*P.*)

§ *Sermons*, pp. 137, 138. Dr. Priestley added here *vers.* 9—11, but they are not quoted by Dr. Price.

After reciting the *Socinian* interpretation of this passage,* you add, "It is natural to ask, here, when did Christ divest himself of the power of working miracles? The gospel history tells us that he retained it to the last, and that he was never more distinguished than when, at his crucifixion, the earth shook, the rocks were split, and the sun was darkened. Indeed, the turn and structure of this passage are such, that I find it impossible not to believe, that the humiliation of Christ, which St. Paul had in view, was not his exchanging one condition on earth for another, but his exchanging the glory he had with God before the world was, for the condition of a man, and leaving that glory to encounter the difficulties of human life, and to suffer and die on the cross. This was in truth, an event worthy to be held forth to the admiration of Christians."†

Indeed, had such an extraordinary event as this, really taken place, it certainly would have been asserted with unequivocal clearness, have been frequently repeated, and have been dwelt upon, as its importance required. But because it is no where *clearly asserted*, and much less, *dwelt upon*, by the sacred writers, I cannot persuade myself that any such thing ever took place. For, whatever you may *infer* from this passage, the apostle neither here nor elsewhere, *plainly says* that Christ existed before he was born in this world.

Whatever be meant by the phrase *the form of God*, whether the power of working miracles, or any thing else, we are not told that he was possessed of it *before his birth*. To affirm that he was, is not *interpreting* scripture, but *adding* to it. And as the same exaltation of Christ, which you make to be the reward of this *degradation*, is always said to have been the reward of his *suffering of death*;‡ we are, in my opinion, abundantly authorized to conclude, that these two circumstances, which had the same consequences, were the same things, let the terms in which they are expressed be ever so different.

You ask, "When did Christ divest himself of the power of working miracles?" I answer, that he ceased to exert

* "The sense they" (the *Socinians*) "give," says Dr. Price, "is this—*Who being in the form of God*, (by the power which he possessed of working miracles,) did not choose to retain that power, and so to appear like God, but divested himself of it, and took on him the form of a servant, *and was made in the likeness of men*. Here they add the epithet ORDINARY, and read this passage as if it had been—*And was made in the likeness of an* ORDINARY *man; and being found in fashion as an* ORDINARY *man, humbled himself to death.*" *Sermons*, p. 138.

† *Ibid.* pp. 138, 139. (*P.*) ‡ *Heb.* ii. 9. See Vol. XIV. p. 353.

this power, (which, to all the purposes of the present question, is the same thing with divesting himself of it,) when he voluntarily yielded himself up into the power of his enemies; though, as he assures us, he might have prayed to the Father, and he would have sent legions of angels to rescue him out of their hands. And however his death was distinguished by miracles, which God thought proper to work for that purpose, it does not appear that he himself was in the smallest degree instrumental in working them; and they did not save him from death, or alleviate his sufferings in the least.

Considering the amazing difference between the appearance of Jesus when stilling the waves of the sea, giving sight to the blind, and raising the dead, and that of the same person in the hands of his enemies, and hanging on a cross; surely it is not too much to describe the former, by saying, that he was *in the form of God*, and the latter by saying he was *in the form of a slave;* crucifixion being the death to which slaves were usually put. I therefore see no reason to be dissatisfied with the interpretation which the *Socinians* usually put upon this celebrated text; nor do I think it to be in the least degree favourable to the *Arian* hypothesis.

I am, &c.

LETTER IX.

Of the Argument for the superior Nature of Christ, from his raising the Dead and judging the World.

Dear Friend,

I now come to the consideration of two circumstances, on which you have laid very great stress, as incontestably proving that Christ must have had powers superior to those of man, and, consequently, have been of a nature superior to that of man; I mean his being destined to *raise the dead and judge the world* at the last day. On this subject you express yourself with peculiar energy, and an air of triumph.

"The Scriptures," you say, "tell us that Christ, after his resurrection, became Lord of the dead and living; that he had all power given him in heaven and earth; that angels were made subject to him, and that he is hereafter to raise all the dead, to judge the world, and to finish the scheme of the Divine moral government with respect to this earth, by conferring eternal happiness on all the virtuous, and punish-

ing the wicked with *everlasting destruction.* Consider whether such an elevation of a mere man is *credible*, or even *possible.* Can it be believed that a mere man could be advanced at once so high as to be above angels, and to be qualified to rule and judge this world? Does not this contradict all that we see, or can conceive of the order of God's works? Do not all beings rise gradually, one acquisition laying the foundation of another, and preparing for higher acquisitions? What would you think, were you told, that a child just born, instead of growing like all other human creatures, had started at once to complete manhood, and the government of an empire? This is nothing to the fact I am considering. The power, in particular, which the Scriptures teach us that Christ possesses, of raising to life all who *have* died, and all who *will* die, is equivalent to the power of creating a world. How inconsistent is it to allow to him one of these powers, and at the same time to question whether he could have possessed the other; to allow that he is to restore and *new*-create this world, and yet to deny that he might have been God's agent in originally forming it!"*

I was not willing to abridge any part of this fine passage, to shew that I am not afraid to meet the full force of your argument. I shall not, however, attempt to answer this piece of eloquence (for such it is) by a similar one. In that I should fail. But I shall take the liberty to *analyze* it, and interpret one scripture expression by another. Now, there are but two particulars of much consequence, in which the great power and prerogative of Christ are here said to consist: one is that of *raising the dead*, and the other, that of *judging the world.*

As to the former, you will hardly say that Christ will *hereafter* raise the dead by any other power than that by which he raised them when he was *on earth;* and this, you have acknowledged, not to have been by any power properly *his own*, but that of his Father, who was in him, or acted by him. And in the same manner you cannot deny but that he was in, or acted by other mere men; for some of the old prophets raised the dead, before Christ, as did the apostles after him. From this circumstance, therefore, we are not obliged to infer that Christ was of a nature superior to that of man.

Christ is also said to *judge the world.* But whatever knowledge may be requisite to his doing *this*, may be as

* *Sermons*, pp. 146—148. *(P.)*

easily imparted by God, as the power of raising the dead; though, when you say that his qualifications for discharging this office were acquired *suddenly*, you overlook the long interval between his ascension and his second coming, in which you cannot suppose that he is doing and learning nothing.

However, if we interpret the Scriptures by themselves, you must acknowledge that this office of judging the world, in whatever it consists, and in whatever manner it be discharged, is no more peculiar to Christ than that of raising the dead. Our Saviour himself says, *Matt.* xix. 28, "Verily, I say unto you, that ye *who* have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."* And the apostle *Paul* says, (1 *Cor.* vi. 2, 3,) "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?"† Whatever superiority to angels is ever said to be given to Christ, is here sufficiently intimated to be given to all Christians; for the person *judging* is certainly superior to the person *judged*.

You may say, that we are to understand the term *judging* literally with respect to Christ, but figuratively with respect to his disciples; but this is quite arbitrary and unauthorized. Judging the world, therefore, is no proof of a nature superior to that of man. Nay, so far is this business of *judging* from being considered as a proof of a *superior nature*, that our Saviour himself represents it as peculiarly proper to him as a man. *John* v. 27: "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the son of man."‡ Not so, the *Arian* will say, but because he is *the Son of God*, and was so before all worlds. But this is being *wise above what is written*.

In this manner it is easily shewn, that, whatever *glory* or *power* is attributed to Christ in the Scriptures, the same *in kind*, if not *in degree*, is ascribed to all his disciples, and especially his apostles. Indeed, this is fully asserted in general, but very expressive terms, by our Saviour himself, in his last solemn prayer, in which he says, (*John* xvii. 22,) "And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one."§ The apostle Paul also says, (*Rom.* viii. 17,) "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be

* See Vol. XIII. p. 260.
† See Vol. XIV. pp. 73, 74.
‡ See Vol. XIII. p. 166.
§ See *ibid.* pp. 334, 336.

that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." From this it is impossible to collect any idea of difference, except in *precedence*, of beings of the same rank. On this idea Christ is styled *our elder brother.** But how could he be considered our *brother*, if he was our maker? The difference would be far too great to admit of any such comparison.

Thus, I imagine, I have in some measure answered your demand, where, after exhibiting what may be called *the low Socinian scheme*, "the only ground," you say, "on which the *Socinian* doctrine is tenable," you add, "The consequence, however, of thus lowering Christ *before* his death, is the necessity of lowering him likewise *since* his death. And accordingly, this able writer, whose candour appears to be such as will not suffer him to evade any fair inference from his opinions, has farther intimated, that Christ's *judging the world* may mean less than is commonly believed, and perhaps the same that is meant, 1 Cor. vi. 2, where it is said, that the *saints are to judge the world*. I hope that some time or other he will have the goodness to oblige the public by explaining himself on this subject; and when he does, I hope he will farther shew, how much less than is commonly believed we are to understand by Christ's RAISING THE WORLD FROM THE DEAD."†

If by Christ's raising men from the dead *hereafter*, you understand a raising them by a power different from that by which he raised them *here*, viz. a power that may, in any proper sense, be called *his own*, which you sometimes seem to apprehend, and which, indeed, your argument requires, my idea of it is very different from yours; but then I think you will not easily find any authority for your opinion in the Scriptures.

There must always be great uncertainty in the interpretation of prophecies not yet fulfilled. We cannot, therefore, expect to understand what is meant by the phrase, *judging the world by Christ*, or *by the saints;* but it is very possible that it may be something very different from what the literal meaning of the words would convey to us. Perhaps neither the saints nor Christ will then discover any greater discernment of characters than all men, even those who shall then be judged, will be possessed of; in consequence of which, every person present may be satisfied, from his own inspection, as it were, that every character is justly discriminated,

* See Vol. XIV. p. 226.

† *Sermons*, p. 130, *Note*. (*P.*)

and the condition of all persons properly determined; all having the same intuitive knowledge of themselves and of each other; all equally judging from the appearances which will then be presented to them. Indeed, a general conviction of the equity of the proceedings of that great day seems to require this general knowledge.

You express much surprise at the *Socinian* interpretation of the Scriptures; and I, in my turn, cannot help expressing some surprise, that the comparison of some prophetic phrases of Scripture, with the fulfilment of them, should not have led you to suspect that much less than the words literally intimate may be intended by what is said of the world being judged by Christ. I shall recall to your attention two prophecies, as they may be termed, of this kind.

When God appointed *Jeremiah* to be a prophet, he said, (*Jer.* i. 10,) "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant." Do not these phrases, literally interpreted, imply that as much power was given to Jeremiah in this world as is ever said to be given to Christ in the next? And yet we are satisfied, that all that was meant by them was, that by him God would signify his intentions concerning what *he* would do with respect to various nations in the neighbourhood of *Judea*, and that *Jeremiah*, personally considered, had no more power than any other man.*

Our Lord said to Peter, (*Matt.* xvi. 19,) "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." To appearance, this was giving *Peter* more power than was given to *Jeremiah*.† But if we consider what was actually done by *Peter* and the other apostles, (for the same power is elsewhere given to them all,) we shall find that much less was intended by this phraseology than the literal import might lead us to imagine.

Interpreters differ with respect to its meaning. But it is evident that, at the most, it could only mean the apostle's being empowered to signify the will of God, and to pronounce what *he* would do; as when *Peter* passed sentence upon *Simon* (*Acts* viii. 20) and upon *Sapphira* [v. 9]. For these are the greatest acts of power that we ever find to be exercised by *Peter*, or any of the apostles. But this was no

* See Vol. XII. p. 211.

† See Vol. XIII. pp. 183, 184.

power of *their own*. Neither, therefore, are we authorized, from the language of scripture, to infer that Christ will hereafter exercise any more power than he did on earth, which was no more than any other man, aided as he was by God, might have exercised.

I am, &c.

LETTER X.

Of the Hypothesis which makes Christ to be a mere Man, naturally as fallible and as peccable as other Men.

Dear Friend,

You express much surprise at my supposing Christ to be naturally *peccable* and *fallible*. But the maxims on which this is advanced with respect to him, you must admit to be just, when applied to any other man appearing in the character of a prophet; and, therefore, till it be proved that he is more than man, they must apply to him also. They are these, viz. that no man claiming a divine mission is to be considered as *inspired* farther than he himself professes to be so, than the object of his mission requires, and than he proves that he is by the working of miracles; and that, with regard to other things, not connected with the object of his mission, and which he does not assert to be parts of the revelation communicated to him, there is no ground to suppose him to have more knowledge than any other man, who is, in other respects, in the same circumstances.

The doctrine of *universal inspiration*, or that of any man being possessed of *all* knowledge, is manifestly extravagant, and would never have been supposed of *Christ* any more than of *Moses*, if it had not been imagined that he was naturally superior to Moses, and, therefore, had means of knowledge which Moses had not. If you consider the object of the mission of Christ, you must, I should think, be sensible, that it did not require more natural power, physical or moral, than that of other men, and, therefore, nothing is gained by supposing him to have more; and much will be lost, if any marks of ignorance or of infirmity should be discovered in him. In that case, we should load the defence of Christianity with needless difficulties.

Again, if other prophets might be ignorant of many things relating to themselves, why might not Christ also? As to his understanding all preceding prophecies, we are no where told that he was inspired with that knowledge, and,

therefore, he might apply them as his countrymen of that age generally did, and as we perceive that the apostles, who were likewise prophets, did afterwards. But this subject is pretty largely discussed in the *Theological Repository*, and I cannot help wishing that you had not only quoted the *sentiments* there advanced, which, at the first proposal, cannot but appear offensive and alarming, but had also examined the *arguments* there alleged in defence of them.

You lay the greatest stress on the *immaculateness of Christ's character*, as an argument for his superior nature. But though you profess to be determined by the language of Scripture, you produce no passage in which his *sinlessness* is expressed in stronger terms than that of other good men, before and after him. If his nature was so *immaculate*, as that no temptation could have any effect upon him, why was he exposed to temptation? This would then have been as absurd as for God himself to have been *tempted with evil.*

That Christ had all the natural weaknesses of human nature, both of body and mind, is evident from the whole of his history; and if so, it was impossible that he should have been *naturally impeccable.* In this case there would have been no merit in his resisting temptation; and his example is very improperly urged upon us, except in the same sense as that in which the example of God himself is proposed to us; whereas it is evident, that the sacred writers had very different ideas of the nature and use of these two examples.

Was it possible that the author of the epistle to the *Hebrews* should have had the idea that you have of the natural strength of Christ's mind, when he said of him, (*Heb.* v. 7, 8,) "Who, in the days of his flesh—offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared. Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."* What can be more evident from this description, than that the writer considered Christ to have been naturally as weak as other men, and that he felt himself to be so?

Was this *strong crying and tears*, in the view of approaching death, what might be expected from the Creator and Governor of the world? The history of the agony in the garden, though it does infinite honour to Christ as a

* See, on *ver.* 9, Vol. XIV. p. 360.

man, is certainly an abundant confutation of any opinion concerning his *superior nature* and pre-existent dignity.

You likewise make the *miraculous conception* of Jesus, as well as his immaculate nature, an argument for his *pre-existent dignity*. These two circumstances are, indeed, generally urged as proofs of each other. For my own part, I scruple not to say, that I consider them both as equally destitute of proper evidence; and, moreover, that neither of them would be of any advantage to the Christian scheme, if they could be proved. With respect to the miraculous conception, I shall only observe here, as I have done elsewhere, that if the circumstance of having *no human father* be an argument for a superior and immaculate nature in *Christ*, the same thing, with the addition of having *no human mother*, must be allowed to be as good an argument for a superior and immaculate nature in *Adam*. And yet he was a mere man, and naturally as liable to sin as any of his posterity.

You ask, and very justly, of this absolute "*immaculateness* of character," "Is it conceivable that it could have belonged to a mere man?"* And this you well illustrate in the Note.† But if you reflect that your *Logos* is a *created*, and therefore an *imperfect* being, you must allow that, strictly speaking, even he cannot be immaculate, any more than he can be omnipotent, or omniscient. It is the prerogative of God only, that great Being, who *only is holy*, and *who charges his angels with folly*.

If absolute perfection of moral character be necessary to that of our *Redeemer*, we must both of us go back to *Athanasianism*. But if that be impossible, why should we acquiesce in an imperfect angelic being, rather than in an imperfect man; especially as it may easily be conceived, that a man like ourselves, incident to the imperfections of other men, is, in several respects, better adapted to be an *example* to us, than any being of a nature superior to ours?

* *Sermons*, pp. 127, 128. *(P.)*

† "Christ, if *impeccable* and *infallible*, (as *Socinians* as well as other Christians have hitherto believed,) must have been not simply a man like ourselves, but (supposing him not to have pre-existed) an angelic being created on purpose at the time of his conception, and endowed immediately with the powers and knowledge of a superior being, without any of those previous acquisitions and gradual advances, which the natures of things, as well as the usual course of the Divine government, seem to require.

"What can be less probable than a creation so extraordinary? The creation of an *unique* amongst men; and for a purpose too which a man, fallible and peccable like ourselves, might have answered as well; and, in some respects, even better!" *Ibid.* p. 128.

You acknowledge that there is some advantage in that *hypothesis* which represents Christ as a man, who had not naturally any advantage over other men. "Some," you say, "have lowered him into a man, ignorant and peccable, and no way distinguished from the common men of his time, except by being inspired. And this, I am sensible, by bringing him down more to our own level, makes his example, in some respects, more an encouragement to us, and more fit to be proposed to our imitation."* Now it is certain that the example of Christ, especially in his humiliation and sufferings, is frequently proposed to us. It cannot, therefore, be any disadvantage to a scheme that gives so important an exhortation its greatest force.

That *Socinus* himself, and others who have been called after his name, should have held an opinion concerning Christ very different from that which I have adopted, is as easily accounted for, as that Dr. Clarke should have adopted an opinion concerning the *Logos* much higher than that which you contend for. After Christ had for several ages been generally considered as the supreme God, and the proper object of worship, it might be discovered that he was a created being, and even a man, and yet it might be thought going too far, not to admit that this created being, or this man, might be the appointed medium through whom our prayers were to be presented to the almighty Father, especially as he is called a *mediator*, and a *high-priest*.

In the same manner, after admitting that Christ was a mere man, and not the object of any worship, it might be thought too degrading to him not to suppose, that a man so distinguished by God as he was, and brought into the world in so extraordinary a manner, as he was believed to be, had not some *peculiar privileges* above those of other men, and other prophets, as those of his being naturally *infallible* and *impeccable*. It is no wonder that it should be some time before even *Socinians* began to think that there was nothing in the Christian scheme that required this *unique* of a man,† and that they should have embarrassed their *hypothesis*, rather than pursue it to its proper consequences, when they appeared so very alarming.

But now, finding this alarm to be founded on mere prejudice, and that the cause of it has no existence in reason or the Scriptures, *Unitarians* in general will, I doubt not, acquiesce in that opinion concerning Christ which makes

* *Sermons*, p. 152, *Note*. (*P.*)

† See *supra*, p. 405, *Note* †.

their hypothesis truly uniform, consistent, and abundantly less exceptionable, viz. that which you hold out as an object of astonishment in the notes to your *Sermons*. In the *Theological Repository*, this hypothesis is fairly proposed and defended; and there I wish to see it dispassionately discussed.

I am, &c.

LETTER XI.

Of the Design of Christ's Mission.

DEAR FRIEND,

I DO not choose to consider largely what you call the other part of the *Socinian* hypothesis, viz. that which relates to *the end of Christ's mission*, with respect to which you say, that he "not only *declared*, but *obtained* the availableness of repentance to pardon,"* having already advanced all that is in my power on this subject, in my "History of the Corruptions of Christianity."† I shall, therefore, content myself with making a very few observations.

1. If what you lay down above be true, if Christ came to obtain the availableness of repentance to pardon, is it not rather extraordinary that this, which must have been the great and principal end of his coming, should not have been announced by any of the ancient prophets?

2. If this had been the great end of Christ's mission, would it not have been declared to be so by *John the Baptist*, by our Saviour himself, or at least by some of the apostles, and in such language as could not have been misunderstood?

3. If such, indeed, was the true cause of Christ's incarnation, is it not extraordinary that it should not have been thought of by any of the Christian fathers, or heretics; and that the idea should never have been started till a late period, as I have shewn in my "History of the Corruptions of Christianity"?

4. The Divine Being is declared to be as merciful to repenting sinners in the *Old Testament* as in the *New*, and without reference to any future event.

5. Our Saviour, giving an account of the mission of the preceding prophets, and of his own, in their order, certainly

* *Sermons*, p. 86. (*P.*)

† Vol. V. pp. 95—97.

represents the great object of their missions to be the same, *Matt.* xxi. 33—37. The preceding prophets are, indeed, compared to *servants*, and himself to the *son of the householder;* but they were all sent *to receive for him the fruits of the vineyard.**

6. As to the sufferings of Christ, not only is his patience in bearing them proposed as an example to us, but in the passage quoted in a former Letter, Christians are represented as both *suffering* and *reigning* with Christ.

Let us not, then, look for *mysteries* where no mystery is, and obscure the beautiful simplicity of the gospel, which represents the Divine Being as always disposed to receive returning penitents, as having sent his Son, as well as other prophets, for the benevolent purpose of reclaiming the world from sin, and to promise eternal life and happiness to all that hearken to them.

I must likewise add a few observations on what seems to have been the source of your ideas of the necessity of Christ's incarnation, and the efficacy of his death. "The whole Christian scheme," you say, "is founded on the supposition of a calamity in which our race had been involved, and which has been generally termed the FALL of man. At the same time," you say, "what the true and full account of this event is, it is probably impossible for us to discover, or even to understand, were it communicated to us. It is recorded in the third chapter of Genesis, but in a manner so mixed with emblems, (derived, perhaps, from the ancient hieroglyphical manner of writing,) and consequently so veiled and obscure, that I think little more can be learnt from it, than that there was a transaction, at the origin of our race, and the commencement of this world, which degraded us to our present state, and subjected us to death, and all its concomitant evils."†

On this subject I would observe that, if *the fall of man*, whatever it was, had been an event on which "the whole Christian scheme is founded,"‡ we might have expected a more express declaration, from sufficient authority, that it was so. But in none of the prophecies in which the *Messiah* is announced, is there the least reference to this catastrophe, which you suppose to have made his incarnation necessary. Neither *John the Baptist*, nor our Saviour himself, ever said any thing that could lead our thoughts to it. And notwithstanding the frequent mention that is made of

* See, on *ver.* 39, Vol. XIII. p. 286. † *Sermons*, p. 170. (*P.*) ‡ *Ibid.*

the love of God in the gift of his Son, by the apostles, it is never said to have been to undo any thing that had been done at the *fall*, some passages of *Paul*, alone excepted, who calls Christ "the last Adam,"* and makes use of terms which imply that death was introduced by *Adam*, as eternal life is the gift of God by *Christ*. But you know that the writings of this apostle abound with analogies and antitheses, on which no very serious stress is to be laid.

Allowing, however, all the authority that you possibly can to the observations of *Paul*, it is far from carrying you to the whole extent of your hypothesis. All mankind, the wicked as well as the righteous, are to rise again, and nothing is said by him that can possibly be construed to signify that "the availableness of repentance to pardon" was ever lost, or that it was recovered by Christ.

Besides, all that *Paul* himself could know about *Adam*, and the effects of his sin, he must have learned from the books of *Moses*, which are as open to us as they were to him. What Moses says on the subject, you acknowledge to be very obscure, and therefore it will not authorize implicit confidence in any particular interpretation.

"There are some," you say, "who give such interpretations of the account in the third chapter of Genesis, and the subsequent references to it in the Sacred Writings—as make them no evidence of any such event (introductory of death) as is commonly understood by the FALL. But these interpretations, and the opinion grounded upon them, are so singular, that I have not thought them worth particular notice."†

The interpretations on which you pass this censure, are pretty generally known to be mine. They are advanced in the *Theological Repository*, with the evidence on which they are founded; and instead of this unqualified censure, it would have given myself, and many other persons, great satisfaction, if you had thought them worthy of a serious examination. The opinion that I have advanced concerning the history of the fall of man, cannot, I am confident, be refuted, but on principles which suppose the plenary inspiration of *Moses*, and that of all the writers of the *Old* and *New Testament*, with respect to every thing they wrote, whether they expressly say that they were inspired or not; a position at which I suspect your mind will revolt as much as mine does.

* 1 *Cor.* xv. 45. See Vol. XIV. p. 118. † *Sermons*, pp. 73, 74, *Note.* (P.)

As *Moses* himself, who seems particularly careful to distinguish what God said to him, and what came from himself, does not say that he received the account that he has given us of the creation, and fall of man, *from God*, I think myself at liberty to consider it as the best that he could collect *from tradition*. In my opinion also, there are many marks of its being a very lame* account. And, as I have observed, it is far from solving the difficulty it seems to have been intended to answer, viz. the introduction of death and calamity into the world. Among other things I have remarked, that the fact of the human race being originally formed male and female, and consequently their being intended to increase and multiply, is a proof that they were also originally intended to be mortal; and that immortality is reserved for that state, in which *there shall be neither marrying nor giving in marriage*, but where men shall *be as the angels that are in heaven*.

You consider *the devil* as the tempter of *Adam* in the form of a serpent.† But this could not have been the idea of *Moses*, according to whom, the sentence passed upon the serpent has no relation to any thing but to the animal so called. And would there be any justice in punishing the serpent, the mere passive instrument, and letting the proper agent in the business go free? Moses had no idea of any thing beyond the mere serpent, and I cannot allow any authority to the interpretation of the author of the apocryphal book of *Wisdom*.‡

That our Saviour alludes to the agency of the devil in the first introduction of sin into the world, is, I think, by no means probable. He says, (*John* viii. 44,) "The devil —was a murderer from the beginning."§ But this refers to the murder of *Abel* by *Cain*. And as to what *John* says, (1 *Ep.* iii. 8,) of "the Son of God" being "manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil," it may well be supposed to mean that he came to put an end to *sin*, or *moral evil*, which is referred to *the Devil*, or *Satan*, as its principle, as all other *evil* is. On this account *Peter* is called *Satan*, (*Matt.* xvi. 23,)‖ when he suggested an unworthy proposal, and *Judas* is called *the devil*, (*John* vi. 70,) on account of his bad designs.¶

As to "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, in *Rev.* xii. 9, xx. 2, on which you lay some stress,** I really

* Corrected by the Author to *imperfect*. See *Let.* VII. to Dr. Price, *infra*.
† *Sermons*, p. 178, *Note*. (*P.*)
‡ *Ch.* ii. 24. See *ibid.*
§ See Vol. XIII. p. 225.
‖ See *ibid.* p. 185.
¶ See *ibid.* p. 162.
** *Sermons*, p. 179, *Note*.

do not pretend to understand it. It is the language of prophecy perhaps not yet fulfilled. It must also be observed, that this same old serpent is likewise called (*Rev.* xii. 9) "the great dragon," and this dragon is farther described [*ver.* 3] as being *red*, and having "seven heads, and ten horns," with "seven crowns upon his heads." He has also [*ver.* 4] a *tail*, by which he "drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth." And, according to most interpreters, this "red dragon," with "seven heads,—seven crowns, and ten horns," is not the *devil*, (admitting the existence of so extraordinary a being,) but represents some earthly potentate, the enemy of Christianity.* But whatever be the meaning of this prophecy, we are not to look into so mysterious a book as the *Revelation*, for a plain account of either the introduction of evil into the world, or the remedy of that evil. It seems to have been written for a very different purpose.

I am, &c.

LETTER XII.

The Conclusion.

DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE now troubled you with animadversions on every thing that I think most open to objection in your truly excellent *Sermons*, and especially in the *Notes*, in which you chiefly quote what has been advanced by myself, either in works that bear my name, or in the *Theological Repository*. Let the arguments I have there advanced, and to which you have not directly replied, answer for themselves. You justly observe, that I do not shrink from any consequences of what I have advanced. Indeed, if a *proposition* be true, so must every *corollary* fairly drawn from it; and I have not yet seen any reason to be afraid of *truth*.

Some of the opinions on which you have slightly descanted are, I believe, novel, and a step, as you may say, beyond what other *Socinians* have gone; and yourself, and others of my best friends,† are a good deal staggered at them. But in a short time this alarm, which is already much abated, will be entirely gone off, and then I shall expect a calm discussion of what I have advanced; and that doctrine will, no doubt, be established which shall appear to be

* See Vol. XIV. pp. 472, 473, 500, 501. † See *Mem. of Lindsey*, p. 225.

most agreeable to *reason*, and the true sense of *scripture*. May whatever will not stand this test, whether advanced by myself or others, soon fall to the ground; but let no sentiment, however alarming at the first proposal, be condemned unheard and unexamined.

Many of our common friends express some surprise that you and I, connected as we are by friendship, and a variety of other common circumstances; equally, I hope, ardent and equally unwearied in the pursuit of truth; and having given perhaps equal attention to the subject of these *Letters*, should, notwithstanding, differ so much as we do with respect to it. Many persons who know this, and who have not the leisure, or the opportunity, to study this question, that we have, may be led to think, that it will be in vain for *them* to attempt to arrive at any certainty with respect to it; and, out of despair, abandon the examination. But neither you nor myself shall think this inference a just one; since each of us may be under the influence of prejudices, unknown to ourselves, but sufficiently conspicuous to others. Nay, with a beam in our own eye, we may fancy that we can discover a mote in that of each other.

You will, I doubt not, be able to account to yourself for what you will think my obstinacy in defending principles which to you appear evidently contrary to reason and the Scriptures, under the idea of their being important truths. And I also must have some method of satisfying myself how *you* may be as ingenuous, and as candid, as I, of course, think myself to be, and yet persist in opinions which I cannot help considering as wrong, and of the erroneousness of which there seems to be the most abundant evidence.

Speaking of the *Socinian* interpretations of scripture, you say, "I must own to you, that I am inclined to wonder that wise and good men can satisfy themselves with such explanations." But you candidly add, "But I correct myself. I know that Christians, amidst their differences of opinion, are too apt to wonder at one another; and to forget the allowances which ought to be made for the darkness in which we are all involved."*

You are too much of a philosopher to think that there can be any *effect* without an adequate *cause;* and you know that *wonder* is nothing more than the state of mind into which our ignorance of the causes of the events throws us. And, therefore, whenever we think we can account for any appearance, all wonder ceases.

* *Sermons*, p. 135. *(P.)*

You will, I know, excuse me, if I account to myself for your continuing an *Arian*, notwithstanding the evidence that has lately been produced in proof of the *Socinian*, or as I choose to call it, the *proper Unitarian* hypothesis, in the same manner in which we account for many worthy and intelligent persons continuing *Catholics* or *Calvinists*. This we believe to be chiefly owing to their minds having been very early impressed with the fullest persuasion of the truth of their respective principles; to their dwelling long on the arguments in favour of them, (by which they are much magnified in their view,) and to their not giving sufficient attention to those on the other side.

They may have the candour to hear, or to read arguments against their opinions. But their minds being previously indisposed towards them, such arguments find there nothing congenial to themselves, and are not detained long enough to make a due impression. It is like the passage of a ship through the sea, or that of an arrow through the air. No track is left behind. Whatever it be that has once recommended itself to us, and we entirely relish, we wish to see confirmed; and it is always with some degree of aversion that we hear any thing that tends to disturb what we think already well settled.

You have read, I doubt not, with as much care and attention as, from the previous state of your mind, could reasonably be expected, all that has been written by Dr. Lardner, by our common friend Mr. Lindsey, and by myself, in support of the *Unitarian* hypothesis. But I presume, that you have often refreshed your mind, and recruited your former opinions, by the writings of Dr. Clarke, Bishop Butler, Mr. Pierce, Mr. Emlyn, and other *Arians;* and having been early conversant with them, they have made an impression like that which is sometimes made on marble before it is concreted into a solid form, and which nothing can afterwards efface.

On the other hand, I shall not be offended, if you should account for my roving from one opinion to another, by supposing that I have a temper of mind too hostile to every thing that is *established;* or if you should say, that I am more apt to be satisfied with any thing belonging to myself, than with my *opinions*, and that I am not likely to fix long in any scheme.

Certain it is, that, so far from having much fondness for the opinions that I received from my education, I have gone on changing, though always in one direction, from the time

that I began to think for myself to the present day, and I will not pretend to say when my creed will be fixed.

But whether we be apt to keep our opinions a longer or a shorter time, they please us so long as we can call them *ours;* and in that state of mind it is natural to give more attention to arguments that make *for*, than to those that make *against* them.

As to *the Scriptures*, the perusal of particular texts never fails to be accompanied with their usual long-approved interpretation; and we oftenest think of, and dwell upon, those which favour our opinions. And with respect to those which seem unfavourable to them, we have all got some method or other of disposing of them, so that they shall not stand in our way; and these modes of accommodation never fail to occur to the mind along with the texts themselves, and thereby effectually preclude the conviction they might otherwise bring along with them. And if we think that, upon the whole, *the Scriptures* are favourable to our opinions, we are apt to consider ourselves justified in giving little attention to other considerations; which, if properly reflected upon, might serve to give us a better insight into the real sense of scripture itself.

Thus the pious *Catholic* having always been taught implicit confidence in the decisions of his church, and having always understood our Lord literally, when he said, "This is my body,"* and "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you;"† it is in vain to object to him the natural impossibility of the doctrine of *Transubstantiation*. *That* he leaves with God, whose word, he believes, assures him of the *fact*. In this, therefore, he thinks it his duty to acquiesce; and he even makes a merit of sacrificing his *reason* to his *faith*.

In like manner, you must permit me to say, that, having in a very early period adopted your present opinion concerning Christ; having always considered the *Logos* in the introduction to the gospel of *John*, (which "was in the beginning with God," and which "was God,") to be descriptive of *Christ;* having always understood the phrases *creation by Christ*, and his being *before Abraham*, &c., not in a figurative, but a literal sense, you have satisfied yourself with paying but little regard to the natural improbability (though in my opinion approaching very nearly to an impossibility) of your *hypothesis*. And then with respect to the

* *Matt.* xxvi. 26. See. Vol. XIII. p. 310. † *John* vi. 53.

numerous passages in which Christ is spoken of as *a man*, unable *to do any thing of himself*, which the *Athanasians* interpret of his *human nature* only, you are satisfied with referring them to his state of *degradation*, in which he was only "in fashion," or *external appearance*, "as a man."

Being thus secure with respect to the argument from *scripture* which we all consider as the great strong hold of our faith; though, I doubt not, you have read with care all that I have written to prove that the great body of primitive Christians were *Unitarians*, you will naturally think either that the proof is somewhere defective, (though you may not be able to say *where*,) or at most, that it can only furnish one uncertain light to the interpretation of scripture, which to you appears, in this case, to be so plain, that it needs no interpretation at all.

I have not, therefore, the least expectation that any thing that I have advanced in these *Letters* will be able to make much impression on your mind; except that you may, perhaps, be led to think, that you had not sufficient authority for concluding that Christ, by his super-human power, accelerated his own death. On this subject I am willing to hope that the evidence I have produced of your having mistaken the meaning of the evangelists is so clear and unexceptionable, that you may not see much to object to it.

But this concession, which is the utmost that I dare flatter myself with the hope of, does not materially affect your general *hypothesis*. You will even probably still think, that Christ raised himself from the dead, and will have no doubt of his being a great pre-existent spirit, the maker of the world, from matter with which he was furnished by the Father; and that he condescended to become incarnate, for the purpose of making it consistent with the justice of God to receive penitent sinners into his favour.

On the other hand, I must acknowledge, that my persuasion of the simple humanity of Christ, and even that of his being a man, naturally as weak, as fallible, and as peccable as other men, is so fixed, from my present ideas of the meaning of scripture, and a variety of other considerations, tending to prove that such *must* be the meaning of scripture; that I have no idea of the possibility of my being ever brought to entertain a contrary sentiment. Indeed, I do not think that the arguments in favour of *Arianism* can be better exhibited, and as I may say, concentrated, than they are in your *Sermons*. In all probability, therefore, you and I must

wait for farther light till the arrival of *the great teacher Death*, and the scenes that will follow it.

In the mean time, our difference of opinion on this subject will not, I am confident, make the least change in our friendship and affection. We are equally, I trust, lovers of truth and lovers of virtue; and also equally lovers of Christ, and of his gospel, notwithstanding our very different ideas of his person, and the object of his mission; though you consider him as your *maker*, and I as the *son of Joseph and Mary*, and (exclusive of divine communications) as possessed of no natural advantages over his father Joseph, or any other man in a similar situation of life in Judea.

It is likewise an equal satisfaction to both of us to think that, on whichever side the truth lies, it will finally prevail over prejudice and error; and that, though the error be the opinion that we are now contending for, we are ready to say *amen* to a prayer for the extermination of it.

With the greatest respect and affection,
I am, dear Friend, yours sincerely,
J. PRIESTLEY.

Birmingham, March 1, 1787.

A LETTER

TO

*The Rev. Mr. PARKHURST.**

אני מאמין באמונה שלימה שהבורא יתברך שמו
הוא יחיד ואין יחידות כמוהו בשום פנים והוא
לבדו אלהינו חיה הוה ויהיה:

Fid. Jud. Art. 2.

Præceptum de idolatria quasi tanti ponderis est ac reliqua omnia mandata.
Maimonides de Idolatria.

Rev. Sir,

When the preceding parts of this pamphlet were nearly printed off, I received (obligingly sent me by yourself) a treatise of yours, entitled, "The Divinity and Pre-existence of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, demonstrated from

* Well known by his "Hebrew and English" and "Greek and English" *Lexicons*. He died in 1797, in his 69th year, at Epsom, where, in the church, is an inscription to his memory, written by his friend the Rev. W. Jones, of Nayland. See "Life of the Rev. J. Parkhurst, A.M." prefixed to his "Greek and English Lexicon," Ed. 5, 1809, p. ix.

Scripture, in Answer to the first Section of Dr. Priestley's Introduction to his History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ, together with Strictures on some other Parts of that Work,"* and I cannot pass without notice the production of so learned a writer.

You must excuse me, however, if I say that, having heard some time ago of this publication of yours, I had, from your character, formed expectations, which I do not find answered by it. I had been led to imagine, that you would have criticised my *History itself*, as a learned ecclesiastical historian, and not have contented yourself with replying to a single section of the *Introduction* to it, which only relates to a discussion in which little *new* can be advanced, viz. of the doctrine of the Scriptures concerning the person of Christ. The proper object of my work is to ascertain what must have been the sense of the books of Scripture, from the sense in which they were actually understood by those for whose use they were composed; and to determine what must have been the sentiments of the apostles, by means of the opinions of those who received their instruction from them only.

This is a new, and certainly an important field of argumentation, open to the learned part of the Christian world; and I had flattered myself that Mr. Parkhurst had been prepared to enter it with me. But this you entirely decline, because you think "your time may be much better employed."† On the contrary, I cannot help thinking that, in the present state of things, it would have been much better to go over this new ground than to tread over again the old and beaten one.

In your Strictures, however, on my work, you think you have proved that *Clemens Romanus*, *Ignatius*, and *Polycarp* were believers in the divinity of Christ. But what you have urged on this subject appears to me to be of little consequence, and to have been sufficiently obviated by what I have advanced in my *History;* so that I see no occasion

* Published in 1787, with "a Postscript, relative to a late publication of Mr. Gilbert Wakefield." This was his "Enquiry into the Opinions of the Christian Writers of the Three first Centuries, concerning the Person of Jesus Christ," 1784. The *Postscript* is thus noticed by Mr. Wakefield:

"The Rev. Mr. Parkhurst, formerly of Clare Hall, Cambridge, bestowed part of a book, written more particularly against Dr. Priestley, in attempting to confute some of the positions in this publication. If I recollect rightly, his arguments were nothing more than some of the stale futilities on the *plural termination* of the *Hebrew* word ELOHIM, in defence of the *Trinity*, unworthy of a moment's consideration. If such remarks were *philologically* just, (which they are not,) who would choose to construct a system *so extraordinary*, upon the weak foundation of a *grammatical* singularity of language?" *Mem. of Wakefield*, I. pp. 249—251.

† *Answer*, p. 147. *(P.)*

to trouble our readers with any thing more on the subject. Let them compare my observations with your reply. Indeed, I do not know what more to say to any person who can seriously maintain, that the appellation of *God*, perpetually applied to Christ in the shorter epistles of *Ignatius*, is no interpolation; such as the example you have produced, "I wish you all happiness in our God Jesus Christ."* This, Sir, is neither apostolical language, nor, indeed, that of any writer whatever, in any age of the church.

With respect to the great object of my work, you grant almost all that I contend for, when you say, "There is but too much reason to apprehend what Dr. Priestley, in the course of his work, several times mentions with triumph, to wit, that the bulk of Christians have, in all ages of the church, been inclined to the Unitarian doctrine."† And yet you say, "Mr. Howes has justly observed, that the modern opinion concerning the humanity of Jesus through life, has not the least countenance in its favour from the tenets of any one of the ancient sectaries."‡ This expresses more confidence on the subject than Mr. Howes himself has done, as you include *Photinus* among those who were not properly *Unitarians*. How this very extraordinary position will be supported by Mr. Howes or yourself, time, I suppose, will shew. It must, however, be by another kind of ecclesiastical history than any that I am yet acquainted with.

As to the *orthodox* Fathers, whose writings I have made use of in tracing the rise and progress of the doctrine of the Trinity, you treat them with a degree of indifference and contempt that really astonishes me. "With regard to the follies of the succeeding Christian writers, whether Greek or Latin, who, *neglecting the Hebrew Scriptures*, idolized the very imperfect and faulty version of the Septuagint, and yet frequently followed the *ignes fatui* of their own imaginations, and of the Platonic and other vain philosophy,—as to such follies as these, I have no great objection to their being treated with the severity they deserve, though I should not myself choose the office of executioner."

But if there be any truth in the *outline* only of my *History*, the doctrine of the Trinity had no existence till it was started by these very Platonizing fathers, so that the *folly* you ascribe to them must reflect upon the doctrine itself.

* *Answer*, p. 135. (*P.*)
† *Ibid.* p. 9. (*P.*)
‡ *Ibid.* p. 98. (*P.*)

It appears from their own confession, that this doctrine gave the greatest offence to the great body of unlearned Christians, who had not been taught with clearness any other doctrine concerning Christ than that he was a man inspired by God. You yourself produce a passage from *Eusebius*, in which it is said, that "the divinity of Christ was a doctrine reserved by the Holy Spirit for John, as being more excellent;"* and the earliest date of his gospel is the year 64: consequently, before this time, the Christian church must have been *Unitarian*.

If I have sufficiently proved the truth of these facts, and others connected with them, it must be in vain to pretend that the Scriptures of the *New Testament* will admit of any other than an Unitarian interpretation. And the evidence of the facts I refer to does not depend upon writings, the authenticity and purity of which are so questionable as those of the apostolical fathers, but on the uniform, concurrent testimony of all the Christian writers, from the age of the apostles till long after the Council of *Nice;* and their works have, in general, come down to us as perfect as any ancient writings whatever.

I have also shewn, much at large, that the Unitarians were not considered as *heretics* till a late period. I said, that even the *Ebionites* are not directly called heretics by *Irenæus*. In one passage, however, from this writer, which you produce,† you think that it does appear, that he must have considered them in that light. But admitting this, it amounts to nothing of any consequence, as it is expressly asserted by Jerome, that the Ebionites, who lived in a state of separation from other Christians, were considered as heretics only on account of their observance of the law of Moses.

As you have not even attempted to answer my work itself, I have no occasion to examine any thing that you have advanced; but, having this opportunity of addressing a letter to you, I shall make a few observations on an article which you have laboured the most in your performance, viz. the proof or *demonstration*, as you call it, of the doctrine of the Trinity, from the plural form of the word which is used to denote *God* in the Hebrew language, viz. אלהים, *elohim*, or, as you write it, *aleim*.

"*Aleim*," you say, "regularly and precisely denotes *the denouncers of a conditional curse*, and by this very important Hebrew name, the ever-blessed Three represent themselves

* *Answer*, p. 99. (*P.*)

† *Ibid.* p. 96. (*P.*)

as *under the obligation of an oath* to perform certain conditions."* Taking this for granted, you say, "The doctrine of a plurality in Jehovah is taught in above two thousand places of the Old; and I add, that this plurality is, by a number of passages in both Testaments, fixed to a Trinity."† You likewise find an intimation "of the doctrine of the blessed unity in trinity, and trinity in unity,"‡ in the three men who appeared to Abraham.

Few persons, I believe, except those who pretend to find the philosophical discoveries of the present age in the *Hebrew* words of the *Old Testament*, will be disposed to lay any stress on this argument or demonstration of yours. *Basnage* and others, as zealous Trinitarians as yourself, have shewn the futility of it; and till what they have written be answered, I should be abundantly justified in taking no notice at all of it. I shall, however, as the opportunity may never occur again, make a few observations on this subject.

1. Admitting the plural form of the word signifying *God* to be a just foundation for believing that there is a plurality in the Divine essence, it is only in one particular language, which can no more be proved to be of divine origin than any other language, and may not even have been the most ancient; so that it might be merely accidental that this word, as well as several others in the same language, and many in all languages, had a plural, and not a singular form.

2. We are no where taught in the *Old Testament* that this mysterious doctrine of *three divine denouncers of a conditional curse* (at the idea of which the mind recoils) is to be inferred from the form of the word *aleim*.

3. As the same word is used to signify the Heathen gods, as well as the God of Israel, it might be expected that all nations had an idea of a plurality in the essence of all their gods. This you in part allow, and endeavour to prove it in the case of *Hecate*, or *Diana*;§ and you suppose, that the *Philistines*, who applied this term to their god *Dagon*, "might be used to compound idols."‖ But you ought to have extended this to *all* the Heathen gods, as well as to *Hecate*. But really Sir, I wonder you were not struck with horror at this indirect comparison of your holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, to the three-fold form of a Heathen god-

* *Answer*, p. 69. (*P.*)
† *Ibid.* p. 82. (*P.*)
‡ *Ibid.* p. 16. (*P.*)
§ *Ibid.* p. 144. (*P.*)
‖ *Ibid.* p. 156. (*P.*)

dess. You might as well have pitched upon the three-headed monster *Cerberus*, for your purpose. What would you have said if *I* had said any thing that could have led the mind to any such comparison?

4. Can you make it appear, that any of the ancient Jews understood the word *aleim* as you do, or that they drew any such inference from it? This you seem to have taken for granted, and you add, that "a very great majority of the Jews, before our Saviour's coming, had apostatized from the doctrine of the divine Trinity."* But where, Sir, do you find the records of this great apostacy? And where are we to look for the remonstrances on the subject, which would certainly have been made by those who did not apostatize? Of the apostacy of the Israelites from the worship of the true God to that of idols, we have abundant evidence; but of this greater change in the sentiments of a great majority of the nation, we have no account at all.

Of those Jews who had apostatized from the doctrine of the *Trinity*, you say, "*they* could not possibly, at the time he" (Christ) "appeared, have supposed that the Messiah would be the second person in the Trinity."† And as to the Jews who were after our Saviour's time, you do not pretend to find among them any trace of the doctrine of the Trinity, or of the divinity of the *Messiah*. With respect to these, you say, "I must enter my solemn protest against being guided by them, as to the sense of the sacred books, or in any matter of religion whatever; because the blessed Master whom I profess to follow and to obey, has repeatedly called the predecessors and instructors of these modern Jews, *fools and blind*, i. e. as to religious knowledge, and has said of them, *they be blind leaders of the blind; and if the blind lead the blind, shall not both fall into the ditch?*"‡

But can you, Sir, imagine that, if our Saviour had found in the Jewish teachers so capital a departure from the doctrine concerning God, as this apostacy from the ancient *Mosaic* doctrine of the Trinity must have been, he would not have distinctly pointed it out, and that he would not have warned the people against the false glosses of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* upon *this* article of the law, as he did on others of much less importance? He had one fine opportunity, you must acknowledge, of doing this, and of explaining the doctrine concerning the Divine essence, when he was questioned about "the first commandment." (*Mark* xii. 28.) But both

* *Answer*, p. 36. (*P.*) † *Ibid.* ‡ *Ibid.* p. 33. (*P.*)

the Scribe and himself, on that remarkable occasion, assert the absolute unity of the Divine nature.

You do maintain, however, that our Lord's own disciples were at least *sufficiently prepared*, by his discourses, to consider him as God, during their intercourse with him.* But how does this appear when, after his crucifixion, we find two of his disciples, on their way to *Emmaus*, expressing their highest admiration of him in these words: (*Luke* xxiv. 19:) "Jesus of Nazareth, *who* was a prophet mighty in deed and word, before God and all the people"? Is this the natural language of men who had ever considered Christ as properly God, or who were at all prepared so to do?

I shall not enter with you into a discussion of the meaning of *particular texts;* having, as I think, sufficiently explained all those on which you descant, in my other writings. But I cannot help noticing your very curious interpretation of Christ's saying, (*John* v. 30,) that *he could do nothing of himself.* "We see, then," you say, "in what sense only the Son of God, in this passage, disclaims any power of his own, and says, that *he can do nothing of himself*, viz. as acting distinctly from his Father, with whom he was united."† But would you, Sir, have put the same construction on any similar saying of *Moses*, or any other prophet? Besides, if in this sense only Christ could do nothing of himself, in the same sense the Father also could do nothing of himself; since, on your *hypothesis*, he must always act in conjunction with the Son. But where do you find any assertion like this in the Scriptures?

Indeed, Sir, unless you, or your friends, can make a better defence than you have yet done of the doctrine of the Trinity, notwithstanding you say, you consider me "as by no means a formidable opponent on scriptural subjects,"‡ the consequence of which you express so much dread, viz. that "the religion of this once Christian land will be reduced to a level with Mahometanism, and even in some respects below it,"§ must follow. In this method of characterizing *Unitarianism*, you think, no doubt, to bring an odium upon it; but the comparison is now too much hackneyed for that purpose; and you are mistaken if you think that I am ashamed to avow my agreement with the *Mahometans*, or any other part of the human race, in the doctrine of the *Divine Unity*, and to worship together with them, *the one God and Father of all, the maker of heaven and earth.*

* *Answer*, p. 119. (*P.*)
† *Ibid.* p. 62. (*P.*)
‡ *Advertisement*, p. 6. (*P.*)
§ *Ibid.* p. 7. (*P.*)

You, Sir, as well as my other adversaries think, I presume, to derive some advantage to your cause, from depreciating my knowledge of the learned languages, which is so necessary in these theological discussions. Dr. Horsley will not allow me to know any thing of *Greek*. Mr. Badcock makes me ignorant even of *Latin;* and you say of me, "He appears to have but a slender acquaintance with the original language of the Old Testament, and never to have read the Hebrew Bible with care and attention. If he had, it seems almost impossible that he should have fallen into such palpable errors as he has done."* You even insinuate, that I may not know "that ם is as truly a plural termination in Hebrew, as —*s* is in our language."†

Whether I be ignorant of *Hebrew* or not, your *proofs* of my ignorance are not a little curious. One of them is, that "in the section of my Introduction, which professedly relates to the Scriptures in general, I have not produced a single Hebrew word,"‡ which I might have done, and yet have known very little of the language. And as to the unpardonable mistake I have fallen into, it is no other than, I dare say, Bishop Lowth would have fallen into as well as myself; for neither of us would probably have thought of inferring the doctrine of the Trinity from the word *aleim*.

On this subject of the knowledge of *Hebrew*, I will say, (and you may smile at me if you please,) that as I have said I would not exchange my knowledge of *Greek* for that of Dr. Horsley, so neither would I exchange my knowledge of *Hebrew* with even that of Mr. Parkhurst, unseen, and unexamined.

I have, in the course of my life, given very particular attention to the *Hebrew* language. I began the study of it when I was about fifteen, and remember that, at about eighteen, I read in the historical books of the *Old Testament*, from Hebrew into English at family prayers. I taught Hebrew to a friend now living, before I was eighteen. Before I was twenty, I had read the Hebrew Bible twice through, once with points, and once without points. I had, likewise, read other books in Hebrew besides the Bible, and had begun the study of other oriental languages. I was then pretty well acquainted with *Syriac*, and was able to read *Arabic*.§ After this, though my attention was drawn to other objects, I never wholly laid aside my application to

* *Advertisement*, p. 6. *(P.)*
† *Ibid.* p. 3. *(P.)*
‡ *Ibid.* p. 6. *(P.)*
§ See Vol. I. *Memoirs*, 17.

Hebrew; and it has happened that, within less than six months of the last year, I read the Hebrew Bible quite through, chiefly in *Kennicott's* edition, (led to it in some measure, by a present being made me of that noble work by a person unknown, and for which I take this opportunity of returning thanks,) and this I did without considering it as any great addition to my other business. If, after all this, I know so very little of *Hebrew* as you represent, there must be something very extraordinary in the case; and the story will yield but little encouragement to other persons to apply to it.

But, really, Sir, the important question is not, whether Dr. Horsley or myself know more of *Greek*, or whether you or I know more of *Hebrew*, but which of us makes the best use of what we do know.

With real respect,* though with great difference of opinion,

I am,

Rev. Sir,

Your very humble servant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

Birmingham, March 7, 1787.

* Of this respect Dr. Priestley's present opponent appears to have been highly deserving, as a clergyman disinterestedly adhering to the Established Church, as a dispenser of church-patronage, which "he was unfashionable enough to consider as a trust rather than a property," and as the possessor "of two considerable estates." Mr. Parkhurst's biographer relates several transactions very honourable to his memory. See his *Life*, prefixed to the "Greek and English Lexicon," pp. v. viii.

DEFENCES OF UNITARIANISM,

FOR THE YEAR 1787;

Containing

LETTERS

TO

THE REV. DR. GEDDES,

TO THE

Rev. Dr. PRICE, Part II.

AND TO THE

CANDIDATES FOR ORDERS IN THE TWO UNIVERSITIES, Part II.,

RELATING TO

Mr. HOWES'S APPENDIX TO HIS FOURTH VOLUME OF

Observations on Books,

A LETTER BY AN UNDER-GRATUATE OF OXFORD,

Dr. Croft's Bampton Lectures, and several other Publications.

———— Meliora supersunt
Sæcula. Non omnes veniet Lethæus in annos
Iste sopor. Poterunt, discussis forte tenebris,
Ad purum priscumque jubar remeare nepotes.

Petrarchæ Africa.

[*Birmingham*, 1788.]

PREFACE.

As I wish not to trouble the public unnecessarily with the defence of what I have written on the subject of the Divine Unity, and it is become physically impossible for me to make particular replies to each of my opponents, I propose for the future to write one pamphlet annually, in which I shall take notice of every thing that I shall think deserving of it, in such publications in favour of the doctrine of the *Trinity* (from the state of things in early times) as the preceding year shall produce. If any thing should require more speedy animadversion, I may perhaps be permitted to

make use of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, as I did with respect to Mr. Howes.*

I have been in expectation of the present year (which is now almost expired) producing treatises of more consequence than it has done; however, I am willing to give all my opponents whatever *time* they may think necessary to the due perfection of their works. Some time must also be allowed to their waiting for, and complimenting, one another; as each of them seems desirous of shifting the burden to shoulders more able to bear it than his own. Thus Mr. Madan† "leaves me for due correction to the superior abilities and erudition of Dr. Horsley, Mr. Howes, and the amiable and reverend Dean of Canterbury."—If I do "not smart under the masterly scourge of Dr. Horsley," he says,

* In the following letter which appeared in *Gent. Mag.* LVII. p. 462:

"MR. URBAN, *Birmingham, June* 11, 1787.

"As your very useful work is particularly calculated to answer the purpose of men of letters, it seems not to be foreign to your plan to make it the channel of occasional notices concerning intended publications. If you have no objection to it, I will, by your means, inform my friends and others, that I have read, with care, Mr. Howes's animadversions on my 'History of Opinions concerning Christ,' in the Appendix to his fourth volume of 'Observations on Books,' and that I pledge myself to shew that they contain nothing that affects any position of consequence, in my work.

"This I would do immediately; but as Mr. Howes intimates that he has more to produce, which he postpones for the present, and other learned works in defence of the Trinity are expected, I wish (in order to avoid too frequent publications on the same subject) to consider what they may all advance, at the same time. At all events, however, I propose not to defer my Reply (which is now ready for the press) longer than the next winter.

"One assertion of Mr. Howes, as it appears in his title-page and advertisements, may require a more speedy notice. He imputes to me what he calls 'a curious specimen of romance, in regard to Plotinus being made to instruct the first Christian fathers in the Platonic catechism a whole century before Plotinus was born.'

"This, I am obliged to observe, is absolutely false. He might as well have said that I made Julian and Proclus, their instructors, as I have quoted their writings, as well as those of Plotinus, for the same purpose, viz. as evidences of the tenets of the Platonic school, which school, and its tenets, existed before any of the Christian fathers, as is evident from the works of Philo, who was prior to them all, and who has as much of Platonism as any of them.

"Besides, I have not represented any of the Christian fathers as quoting any of the later Platonists, but only as availing themselves of the principles of Platonism in general, such as they imagined to be the doctrines of Plato himself.

"Mr. Howes charges me with an error with respect to the age of Plotinus in my History; whereas, there the date will be found to be right, as he is said to have died A. D. 270, aged 60; and so it will be found in my large Chart of Biography; though by a mistake, perhaps of the engraver, it is placed just a century wrong in the small chart prefixed to the History.

"Mr. Howes represents me as a man destitute of all regard to truth, and aiming at the emoluments of the Established Church. To such charges as those my Reply would be of no avail.

"Yours, &c.

"J. PRIESTLEY."

† Rector of St. Philipp's, Birmingham, author of "Letters to Dr. Priestley," 1787.

"it is a bad sign for me." All, however, that I can do is to invite this tremendous scourge, and the production of it is not more sincerely desired by Mr. Madan than it is by myself.

Let Dr. Horsley, then, (now that his period of eighteen months is expired,) appear again in support of his attack on the veracity of *Origen*, or of his church of orthodox *Jewish* Christians at Jerusalem, after the time of *Adrian*. As he has been pretty well comforted for his *defeat*,* he cannot doubt of his being amply rewarded for a complete *victory*. Let Mr. Howes also proceed with his argument to prove the late origin of *Unitarians*. The public are willing enough to give them a favourable hearing, and certainly *expect* to hear from them. They are also looking for the great work of Dr. Horne,† and something unknown, but something considerable, from Mr. White, as well as from others, whose names, having only been mentioned in discourse, I have no right to call upon here.

Every year (with satisfaction I see it) brings this important controversy nearer to its proper termination; and the attention that is actually given to it, at home and abroad, and which increases continually, shews that the contempt with which *some* profess to treat it, as if it could have no serious consequences, is only affected; and, that if it was in their power to come forth with any advantage themselves, they would not fail to do it. I am happy to find that the forward zeal of many prevails over the superior discretion of others, and will not suffer the business to sleep; and the publications on one side will be the means of procuring a hearing for those on the other.

As my antagonists in general are very liberal of their compliments to each other, and (in order to encourage others to undertake what they think proper to decline) promise them an easy victory, so some of them combat one another, which will shorten my labour. Thus Dr. Croft‡ makes little account of Mr. Parkhurst's and Mr. Madan's argument from the plural form of the word *elohim*, and Mr. Howes leaves the character of *Origen* unimpeached, and Dr. Horsley's *Orthodox Jewish Church* without defence. Some of them contend for the absolute equality of the Son to the Father, and others plead only for any thing that can, by any construction, be called *divinity*. I need not mention the

* Dr. Horsley was appointed Bishop of St. David's April 15, 1788.
† See *supra*, p. 325, *Note* §.
‡ In his *Bampton Lectures*, 1787. See *infra*.

opposition between the *Arians* and *Trinitarians*, as they do not profess to defend the same ground.

I am singularly happy in having an opportunity of addressing a few more letters to Dr. Price, in consequence of the *Appendix* to the second edition of his Sermons, and I more particularly congratulate our readers on the acquisition of such a controversial writer as Dr. Geddes. I feel a satisfaction that I cannot express in discussing this important question with such men as these. It would even give me pleasure to have an opportunity of acknowledging any mistake they should point out to me. Why is it that, excepting only the Dean of Canterbury, the members of the Church of England cannot write with the same liberality, such as becomes gentlemen, scholars and Christians? When the *history of this controversy* shall be written by an impartial hand, (and such a one, I doubt not, will, in due time, be found,) the champions of the Established Church will not appear to the most advantage, either with respect to the condition of their arms, or their temper and skill in the use of them.

How long this controversy will last, or in what form I shall continue my part in it, is impossible for me to say. My present intention is to proceed with writing *Letters to the Candidates for Orders in the Two Universities*, and, at a proper time, to close the whole with a serious address to the bench of bishops,* and the legislature; after which, I shall have done all that I apprehend to be in my power to promote an important and desirable reformation.

LETTERS

TO

The Rev. Dr. GEDDES.

LETTER I.

Of the Doctrine of the Scriptures, and that of the Apostolical Fathers.

Reverend Sir,

I have seldom received more satisfaction than I have done from the perusal of the *Letter* you have been so oblig-

* The Letters to the Bishops will appear in Vol. XIX.

ing as to address to me, in order "to prove," as you say, "by one prescriptive argument, that the divinity of Jesus Christ was a primitive tenet of Christianity."* You write with a candour becoming a Christian and a *Catholic*, not in name only, but in reality; while others, whose general system of Christianity is more nearly the same with my own, have engaged in the same controversy with a spirit highly unbecoming the character they professed.

Different as your opinions are from mine, you say, "I grant that you are a Christian as well as I, and embrace you as my fellow-disciple in Jesus. And if you were not a disciple of Jesus, still I would embrace you as my fellow-man."† In return, I can do no less than embrace you in both characters. I do it from my heart; and I hope that nothing in my address to you will give the lie to my profession. We are fellow-christians, fellow-men, and joint inquirers after truth; willing, I doubt not, to assist each other in our inquiries, as justly esteeming truth to be the most valuable of all acquisitions, by whomsoever it be found.

In one circumstance relating to this controversy, I, however, differ from you. You expect the ablest defenders of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, in the *Church of England*.‡ On the contrary, I expect them in your *Church of Rome*, in which it originated. It is a doctrine which the Church of England only received from you, and without any alteration whatever. It is, therefore, still your proper tenet, and what you should consider yourselves as peculiarly bound to defend. The members of the Church of England will naturally look up to you for the defence of that tenet which, without any particular examination, they received from you; and they may perhaps abandon it if its proper parent should be unable to maintain it; for their sakes, therefore, as well as your own, it behoves the members of your church to exert themselves on this occasion.

Besides the superior liberality of your sentiments in general, there is a frankness and candour in your *concessions*, that I have not found in any of my numerous opponents. You acknowledge that you do not find the doctrine of the divinity of Christ in the *Old Testament;* you are not very confident that you find it even in the *New;* and you make no difficulty at all of giving up the argument, so much insisted

* See Mr. Good's "Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Alexander Geddes, LL. D.," 1803, pp. 168—175.

† *Letter*, p. 5. *(P.)*

‡ *Ibid.* p. 35. *(P.)*

on by Dr. Horsley, from the writings of the apostolical fathers. "The figures," you say, "the allusions, and the prophecies of the Old Testament, by themselves, present to the unprejudiced reader no explicit idea of the absolute divinity of the promised Messiah—and I must confess, if we had no other clue to guide us, I should be inclined to conclude the Messiah to be a mere man, though endowed with privileges above the rest of mankind. On New Testament ground I think I could make a firmer stand, and fight with you at least on equal terms. Among many ambiguous texts that may be urged against your system, there are certainly *three or four*, the force of which cannot easily be eluded. Witness the hard strainings that have been made by yourself and your party, to give them a plausible Socinian interpretation; whilst they seem, at the very first sight, expressly calculated to justify the doctrine of your adversaries."*

I wish that, in the prosecution of this argument, you would mention the *three or four texts* on which you lay so much stress. In the mean time I would ask, whether there be not many more than three or four, or even than three or four score texts which teach the great doctrine of the sole divinity of the Father, much more unequivocally than any of your three or four unnamed texts do that of the divinity of the Son? I shall on this occasion call to your recollection only a few of them, *Matt.* xix. 17: "Why callest thou me, good? There is none good but one, that is God."† *Mark* xii. 32: "There is one God, and there is none other but he." *John* xvii. 3: "That they might know thee, the only true God." *Rom.* xvi. 27: "To God only wise—through Jesus Christ."‡ 1 *Cor.* viii. 6: "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."§ *Eph.* iv. 5, 6: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God, and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."‖ 1 *Tim.* ii. 5: "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."¶ *Jude* 4: "Denying the only Lord God,** and our Lord Jesus Christ."

How often do we read of the *God*, as well as the *Father*, of our Lord Jesus Christ! And is it not the uniform custom of the writers of the *New Testament* to name *God* and

* *Letter*, p. 67. (*P.*)
† See Vol. XIII. p. 258.
‡ See Vol. XIV. p. 260.
§ See *ibid.* p. 80.
‖ See *ibid.* p. 276.
¶ See *ibid.* pp. 126, 127.
** See *ibid.* p. 439, *Note* ‖.

Christ as contradistinguished from each other? What hard straining, Sir, must it not require to give to any of the above-mentioned texts, which have not so much as the appearance of *ambiguity* in them, a plausible *Trinitarian* interpretation!

You rest this great controversy, as far as it is to be decided by the Scriptures, on *three or four* texts, and what appears to be their sense *at first sight* only. But you know, Sir, that the true sense of many passages of scripture, as well as of other writings, is by no means what it seems to be at first sight, especially when the language is figurative; and that a comparison of them with other passages is often necessary to explain them. There cannot, therefore, appear even to yourself to be any great ground of confidence here; and I might well ask you, whether it be not extraordinary, that a doctrine of so great magnitude as that of the divinity of Christ, and which draws after it consequences of so much importance in practice, as well as theory, (especially the worshipping of him as the supreme God; and which, *at first sight*, you must acknowledge directly militates against the doctrine of the sole divinity of the *one God and Father of all*, expressly called *the God and Father of Jesus Christ* himself,) should rest on three or four texts, of which you can only say that, at first sight, they appear to be in your favour.

The doctrine of *the Unity of God* is unquestionably that of a thousand texts, and is implied in the whole tenor of scripture. This no person ever did, or can deny. And did not the doctrine of *three persons* in this godhead, if it be a truth, require to be declared in as explicit a manner, if it was meant to be inculcated at all? As to the divinity of *Christ*, an ingenious man would easily find as many plausible arguments for the divinity of *Moses*.

If the doctrine of the Trinity be clearly taught in the Scriptures, how comes it that yourself, "after reading the best Athanasian, Arian, and Socinian glossarists," could be, as you say, "Athanasian, Arian, and Socinian, by turns?"* This, Sir, is not my case. The *Athanasian* and *Arian* glossarists only make me a more confirmed *Unitarian*.

If adoration be really due to Christ from his followers, as you say,† why have we so little of either *precept* or *example* of it in the Scriptures? Could *Origen* have written so expressly as he has done against praying to Christ,‡ if it had been the practice of Christians from the earliest ages?

* *Letter*, p. 11. *(P.)*

† *Ibid*, p. 4. *(P.)*

‡ See Lindsey's *Apol.* Ed. 4, 1782, p. 157.

Of the writings of the apostolical fathers, you frankly and justly say, "some are lost, others imperfect, and others interpolated, and, together, afford but an ambiguous commentary on an ambiguous text."*

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

Of the Nicene Council.

Rev. Sir,

On what, then, do you fix your foot, and what is the real ground of your faith in the doctrine for which you contend? When I had read the title page of your pamphlet, I for some time proceeded no farther, but amused myself with conjecturing what your great *prescriptive argument*, that argument which rendered all others unnecessary, might be; but really, Sir, all my conjectures were wide of the truth, for I own I should least of all have expected it where you imagine you have found it. But my readers shall hear yourself on the subject.

"In this dubiety," you say, "I look about for something more explicitly satisfactory, and this I think I find in the formal decision of the Nicæan Council."† When I had discovered this, I was no less at a loss in conjecturing how any decision of such a council as that, called for such a purpose as that was, by such a person as *Constantine*, and especially at so great a distance of time from the age of the apostles, could at all answer, or even seem to answer, your purpose.

On this subject you say, "I ask you whether you think it in the smallest degree probable, that three hundred and eighteen of the principal pastors in the Christian church, convoked from the three parts of the then known world, could possibly combine to establish a doctrine different from that which they had hitherto taught their respective flocks, and which they had themselves received from their predecessors in the ministry?—You must then, I think, allow that, at this period, the belief of the divinity of Jesus was the universal belief of the Christian churches of Asia, Africa and Europe."‡

This then, Sir, is what you call your "invincible, prescriptive proof of the divinity of Christ,"§ and much *elo-*

* *Letter*, p. 11. *(P.)*
† *Ibid.* p. 12. *(P.)*
‡ *Ibid.* p. 14. *(P.)*
§ *Ibid.* p. 19. *(P.)*

quence you employ on the subject; but I own I see in it little of *argument*, or even of plausibility. For the greater perspicuity, I shall state my objections to what you have urged in a number of observations, that their strength, whether viewed separately or jointly, may be more distinctly seen; and at the same time, that if there be any latent fallacy in them, it may be more easily detected.

First. You call the *Nicene* fathers, "the representatives of the whole Christian church."* Now, in my opinion, they represented the Christian church in no other sense than our *House of Lords* might be said to represent the English nation. There was no *House of Commons* in that assembly. There were none to speak the sentiments of the common people, which I have shewn at large, and, from the acknowledgments of several of those fathers themselves, to have been very different from theirs.

Secondly. This celebrated council being held in the year 325,† is too remote from the age of the apostles to be expected (considering the influences to which the learned Christians had been exposed) to retain the primitive doctrine concerning Christ. The doctrines of *Plato* appear to have been in the Christian church as early as the age of *Justin Martyr*, who wrote about A. D. 140. From that time almost all the learned Christians imbibed them; and the consequence of this was, such a rapid departure from the primitive doctrine, that we could not reasonably expect to find it among such bishops as were assembled at *Nice*, in 325.

This consideration alone furnishes a sufficient answer to your irrefragable "prescriptive argument." Had the council been held in the age immediately following that of the apostles, or had the learned Christians confined themselves to the study of the Scriptures, and known nothing of Heathen philosophy; had no enemy sown tares among the good seed, your argument would have had some weight. But this council being held two centuries and a half after the age of the apostles, and near two centuries after the introduction of *Platonism* into Christianity, I cannot allow it to have any weight at all.

Thirdly. I need not remind you, Sir, who appear to know human nature and mankind very well, and who acknowledge that "the fathers assembled at Nice were, both severally

* *Letter*, p. 18. *(P.)*

† See Vol. VIII. pp. 294—304.

and conjunctly, an assembly of fallible men,"* that the inclination of the emperor, (who appears by his speech to them † to have been deeply tinctured with the doctrines of *Plato*,) and that of those bishops who had his confidence, being well known, there would be a great leaning to their opinion ; and that the more conscientious of those who, if they had attended, must have been under the disagreeable necessity of opposing it, would find excuses, and stay at home. Three hundred and eighteen was far from being the whole number of Christian bishops in that age.

Fourthly. If you consider the part that either *Constantine* himself, or the professed enemies of *Arius* took in the business of this celebrated Council, you must acknowledge that very little can be said for the *liberty* of it. I shall only call to your recollection a few circumstances mentioned by *Tillemont*, to whose authority or impartiality you will not object.

On declaring himself a Christian, *Constantine* was extremely desirous to promote the unity of the church, and for that purpose first wrote, by *Hosius*, to Alexandria, on the subject.‡ This measure not succeeding, at the earnest request of Hosius and *Alexander*, bishop of Alexandria, he summoned the Council of *Nice*,§ but not till he had threatened the clergy among the followers of *Arius* with serving in the public offices, if they did not quit the society of so wicked a master, and agree to the pure faith of the church.

When *Constantine* came to the council, he omitted nothing in his power to make the fathers unanimous in their decisions.‖ Many of the friends of *Arius* were induced to join in his condemnation, for fear of banishment, to which Arius himself, and two of his firmer friends were actually sent. After this, the emperor ordered all the books of *Arius* to be burned, and those who concealed them to be put to death.¶ These are some of the particulars relating to the conduct of Constantine.

The greatest opposers of *Arius*, those who may be called his personal enemies, were *Alexander*, *Athanasius*, and *Hosius*. The last had presided in a council at Alexandria, in which Arius was condemned. Athanasius calls him the conductor of all the councils. Alexander had so much in-

* *Letter*, p. 12. *(P.)*
‡ See *ibid.* pp. 291, 292.
‖ See *ibid.* pp. 295, 296.
† See Vol. VIII. p. 304.
§ See *ibid.* p. 294.
¶ See *ibid.* p. 304.

fluence at the Council of *Nice*, that he is said to have been the master of all things in it. Athanasius also had great weight there; and had it depended upon him, *Arianism* had been extinguished in it. *Hosius* composed the creed, but *Athanasius* himself assisted in it.

These, Sir, are only translations of different passages in the history that *Tillemont* gives of the Council of *Nice*. Do you, then, who are not ignorant of human nature or human affairs, say what chance *Arianism*, if it had been the truth, could have had in those circumstances, or how far a declaration agreeable to the genuine and primitive doctrines of Christianity was to be expected from the fathers at *Nice*?

Fifthly. In the very next reign, when the emperor was an *Arian*, there were as numerous assemblies of *Arian* bishops, in the same part of the world, as there were of *Trinitarian* ones at *Nice;* and a little before the Council of Nice, there were assemblies of the clergy both in *Bithynia* and *Palestine*, which *Tillemont* calls *councils*, which were in favour of *Arius;* so that, by the same mode of reasoning which you have adopted, it might be proved that Arianism was the primitive doctrine concerning Christ.

Sixthly. Your argument, admitting the justness of your medium of proof, will prove a great deal too much; for it will not only prove that the primitive doctrine was the divinity of Christ in general, but also that *kind* of divinity which those fathers ascribed to him, a kind which I imagine that you, Sir, will not maintain; for it is not the present Catholic doctrine, and, indeed, soon ceased to be so, as I have shewn at large in my "History of Early Opinions concerning Christ." Those fathers universally held that the divinity of the *Son* was greatly inferior to that of the *Father*, and had its origin in the reason of the Father, which, having been first in him as an *attribute*, afterwards became a *person*. Will you or any person, at this day, maintain that *this* was the primitive doctrine concerning Christ, that which was held and taught by the apostles?

Seventhly. The Council of *Nice* was held for the express purpose of the condemnation of one particular opinion, in which the *Unitarians* had no concern. It was to condemn the doctrine of *Arius*, who held that Christ was a creature, produced from nothing, (εκ των μη οντων,) and that there was a time when he was not. In opposition to this, the *Trinitarians* held that the Son was no *creature*, but of the same substance (ὁμοουσιον) with the Father; and that, having been the proper *reason* of the Father, there could never

have been any time in which he was not; for that then the Father would have been without reason. Such, you well know, was the reasoning of the time on the subject.

On these two opinions, the *Unitarians* could much more easily adopt the language of the *Trinitarians*, than that of the *Arians*. For many of them also had learned to philosophize, though not so much as the Trinitarians; and acknowledging, as all Unitarians do, that a divine power resided and acted in Christ, they said that this divine power was that of the Father, and therefore might be said to be the Father, who, being in Christ, did the works by which his divine mission was evidenced. They, therefore, thought themselves authorized to say that the Father and the Son were one and the same, and of course ὁμοούσιοι, or *of the same substance*. A *Sabellian*, therefore, might adopt the language of the Council of *Nice*. This is acknowledged by the learned *Beausobre*. And *Marcellus of Ancyra* did most vehemently oppose *Arius* in that council; a conduct which the Arians never forgave him.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

Of the State of Unitarianism in the primitive Times.

Rev. Sir,

The preceding observations, in my opinion, furnish a sufficient answer to your *irrefragable prescriptive argument*. But, to my great surprise, you farther say, "If the divinity and pre-existence of Christ was not a tenet of primitive Christianity, there must have been a period, prior to the Nicæan Council, when it was accounted a heresy, and when the non-divinity was as universally taught, as the sole orthodox doctrine. Be pleased, then, to point out that period, and prove that it existed, not by negatives, presumptions, and arguments from improbability, but by clear, positive testimony. For until you do this, I shall always consider the decision of the Nicæan Synod as an irrefragable proof, that the divinity of our Lord was an original article of the Catholic faith."*

Again you say, "I think you should have endeavoured, and been able, to shew when, and by whom, and in what manner, such an important revolution was brought about;

* *Letter*, p. 32. (*P.*)

who was the first broacher of the novel opinion, what opposition it met with, which of the apostolic sees was the first to embrace it, and by what wonderful influence it got possession of all the rest; without noise, without resistance, without any of those circumstances that always attend the introduction of a novelty in matters of religion, especially when the contradictory of an established opinion is attempted to be introduced."*

Now all this, or as much of it as any reasonable man can require, I have actually done, in my "History of Early Opinions concerning Christ." By a distinct exhibition of the doctrines of *Platonism*, by an abundant proof of their having been adopted by the Christian fathers, and from the near resemblance between them and the doctrine of the *Trinity* in the first stage of it, I think I have made it most evident, that it had that origin, and no other. No child ever proved its own parent more clearly than this does.

I have also shewn, in the fullest manner, that the *Trinitarian* doctrine was considered as an *innovation*, and that it gave the greatest offence to the common people, though, by the plausible representations and frequent apologies of the learned Christians, they were kept tolerably quiet; till, by means of the overbearing influence of the governing powers, and also that of the great see of Rome, all opposition to the novel doctrine had no effect; notwithstanding, the strongest remonstrances did not fail to be made against it in every period.

I have shewn, Sir, that it was universally acknowledged by the Christian fathers, *Antenicene*, *Nicene*, and *Postnicene*, that the first converts to Christianity, *Jews* and *Gentiles*, were so firmly persuaded of the simple humanity of Christ, that the apostles themselves did not choose to teach openly and clearly any other doctrine. I have shewn that those *Unitarians* were never considered as *heretics*, notwithstanding their opinion differed so much from that which was held by those who afterwards appropriated to themselves the title of *Catholic*. I have produced a variety of other evidence, of the most satisfactory kind, to prove that the primitive Christian church was *Unitarian*, and to no part of it have you so much as adverted in your Letter; so that in the idea of these fathers, the believers in the simple humanity of Christ were not "a few obscure sectaries," as you call them.†

* *Letter*, p. 20. (*P.*)

† *Ibid.* p. 5. (*P.*)

You make very light of the *Ebionites;** but, according to the testimony of *Origen*, they were the whole body of Jewish Christians, of whom some, he says, believed the miraculous conception of Jesus, and others did not, but none of them believed his divinity. Is their opinion and testimony to be esteemed of no value, when *ancient doctrines* are sought for? If this be not the *positive testimony* you require, what is so?

You do not even appear to be apprized of the great object of my work, which was not only to trace the rise and progress of the doctrine of the Trinity, but also to shew that, though the learned Christians, from *Justin Martyr* to the Council of *Nice*, held the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, the greater part of the *common people* were believers in his simple humanity.

Besides, the more learned Christians may easily be supposed to have departed from the primitive doctrine concerning Christ, as they were peculiarly exposed to influences which must have operated very powerfully to produce that effect; whereas the common people were not subject to that dangerous influence, and therefore were much more likely to retain the original doctrine transmitted from the apostles, who certainly were not *Platonists*, and indeed could never have understood such a system as that of the *Nicene* fathers. Universal experience and observation shew, that *old opinions* are longest retained by the common people, and that *innovations* begin with the learned and speculative. These things, Sir, you should have noticed, if you had proposed to make any effectual reply to my work.

I am not much less surprised at the following paragraph in your letter: "Is it not strange," you say, "passing strange, that, in not one of those assemblies," (viz. about forty councils held after that of *Nice,)* "neither at Alexandria, nor Antioch, nor Cæsarea, nor Sardica, nor Jerusalem, nor Constantinople, nor Sirmium, nor Milan, nor Rome, nor Rimini, there should not be a single voice raised in favour of Socinianism, a single pen employed to defend it, a single authority quoted in its support? And that, while the whole body of Christians were engaged in a controversy about two opinions, both equally false, the only true dogma should be overlooked, should be rejected, should be anathematized by all? This, I confess, is to

* *Letter*, p. 16. (*P.*)

me inconceivable—is, in the nature of things, hardly possible."*

Had I not the most perfect confidence in your impartiality and love of truth, I should have concluded from this paragraph, that you had not so much as *read* the work on which you have animadverted. I cannot help suspecting, however, that, imagining your *one prescriptive argument* to be abundantly sufficient for your purpose, you contented yourself with giving but a slight attention to the greater part of my work; and that the few traces which the hasty perusal of it left in your mind, were wholly effaced at the time of writing your *Letter* to me.

Nay, the surprise you express would have been precluded, if you had sufficiently attended to what you yourself justly say of the history of the times which followed the Council of *Nice*, viz. that "in them Arianism and Athanasianism alternately triumphed."† *Unitarianism* was not the object of any of those councils, except those which were called on the account of *Photinus*, and we have no particulars of what passed in any of them. At that time the emperors and leading bishops were all either *Arians* or *Athanasians;* and having to combat with one another, they overlooked the *Unitarians*, whose party was then so low, (not with respect to *numbers*, but to *rank* and *consideration,)* that they had nothing to fear from them. How, then, is it *inconceivable*, that their opinions should be anathematized by both parties, when they were equally hostile to both?

To anticipate my reply to some part of the preceding paragraph, you add, "You will say, perhaps, that even at that time Socinianism was not entirely without its witnesses among the bishops themselves, and refer me to Paul of Antioch, and Photinus of Sirmium. That both these were in some measure Socinians, I grant; but this serves only to give a greater degree of strength to my argument. For, in what light was their doctrine considered by their fellow-bishops, and what were the consequences of their teaching it? They were regarded as blasphemous innovators, threatened with immediate deposition, and excommunicated by both parties.‡ If you think, then, that you can avail yourself of such a testimony, you are welcome to use it; and you may add all the other similar testimonies you can glean through all the preceding ages, from Paul of Antioch

* *Letter*, p. 23. (*P.*)

† *Ibid.* p. 22. (*P.*)

‡ In the time of Paul of Antioch, Arianism had no existence. (*P.*)

up to Cerinthus: all this, when put in the balance with the testimony of the Nicæan fathers, to me appears a grain against a hundred weight." *

In this paragraph, and in this alone, you look back to the time preceding the Council of *Nice;* and the state of things being very different in the different periods of that time, what you say does not apply to them all alike. The *Unitarians* were by no means considered in the same light from the age of *Cerinthus*, which was that of the apostles, to that of *Paul of Antioch*, and much less to that of *Photinus*, though you make no difference in the case. In that of Cerinthus, and long after, they were so far from being considered, or treated, as *heretics*, that it was universally acknowledged that *Unitarianism* was the only doctrine which the unlearned Christians had been taught, even by the apostles themselves; and they were so far from being excommunicated, that by the confession of their adversaries, till the publication of *John's* gospel, after the destruction of Jerusalem, there was no other opinion among the common people. No creed, no sentence of any council, ever presumed to call them heretics. On the contrary, they boldly charged the *Trinitarians*, as soon as they appeared, notwithstanding all their apologies, and the art with which their doctrine was introduced, as *innovators* in the scheme of Christianity. In the time of Tertullian the *major pars*, the *majority* of Christians held this language, and the πλῆθος, *the multitude*, in the time of *Athanasius*.

If you even confine your attention to the *writers*, in defence of *Unitarianism*, who always bear a very small proportion even to the reading and thinking part of any sect, and a still smaller to those who do not read and think, but follow the leading of others, (which is the case with the great mass of all ranks of men,) they will not appear so inconsiderable as you hastily represent them, (especially as it is allowed that the generality of the learned Christians were addicted to *Platonism,)* beginning with *Symmachus*, and ending with *Photinus;* who, in the late age in which he lived, was so popular in his diocese, that three synods, under an *Arian* emperor, were necessary to expel him; and who continued writing to an advanced age, treating every doctrine except the *Unitarian* with just contempt. Among other treatises, he wrote one on the subject of *heresy;* and though, in the early ages, this term had been synonymous to *Gnosticism*,

* *Letter*, p. 24. (*P.*)

it is very possible that, as his enemies had treated him as a heretic, he, who appears to have had no dread of them, treated them as heretics in return.

Two synods were necessary to condemn even *Paul of Antioch*, and the power of the emperor was called in to expel him from the episcopal house, notwithstanding his accusation contained many articles besides matters of doctrine. It appeared probable to Dr. Lardner, that both *Firmilian of Cappadocia*, and the famous *Gregory of Neocæsarea*, favoured him.* That the diocese of the latter swarmed with *Unitarians*, in a much later period, is evident from the epistles of *Basil*, which are very instructive, and give us a clear idea how unpopular, even among the clergy of those parts, were the great defenders of orthodoxy in that age. Low as you may think the *Unitarian* interest to have been after the Council of *Nice*, I doubt not but that an *Unitarian* emperor, or perhaps an *Unitarian* pope, would soon have turned the scale in its favour. But it pleased Divine Providence that the genuine doctrine of the gospel should then have no support from such quarters; and that it should now revive by its own evidence, when all kings, all popes, and all bishops, are still against it.

"In the works of the Antenicene fathers," you say, "whether genuine or spurious, there is not, I think, besides the Clementine Romance, a single work that speaks directly the language of Socinus."†

But you well know that many were *written*, and you cannot wonder that they are not now *extant*. Let not the orthodox reproach us with the want of that evidence which they may have been the means of suppressing.

Considering the time when the *Clementine* homilies were written, as early probably as the writings of *Justin Martyr*, (in my opinion prior to them,) much more may be inferred from them in favour of Unitarianism than you seem willing to allow. The author of that work was a learned Christian, and a fine writer, much superior to *Justin Martyr*. He discusses at great length the philosophical opinions of the apostolic age, which were then generally opposed to Christianity, but which were afterwards incorporated into it. But he combats them solely on Unitarian principles; and not only so, but without giving any hint of there being any other held by Christians, on which they were, or could be, combated; whereas the *Platonizing* fathers, who wrote

* See Lardner's *Works*, III. pp. 42, 85. † *Letter*, p. 33. (*P.*)

against the same general principles, went upon quite different ground.

Now is it probable that so ingenious and learned a writer could do this, and be acquainted with any other mode of proceeding? Considering the number of incidents and discourses introduced into that work, I think it highly probable that, if the writer had even known of such persons as Platonizing Christians, or their doctrine of the *Logos*, he would have made some mention of it there, it had so near a connexion with his subject. I am therefore strongly inclined to suppose, that he had never heard of such a writer as *Justin Martyr*, and that the doctrine of the *Logos*, as the *reason of the Father*, which laid the foundation for the subsequent doctrine of the *Trinity*, as it is now held, had not been started in his time. Consequently, I am inclined to think, that when this work was composed, there were no classes of Christians besides *Unitarians* and *Gnostics*.

When all these things (and many more you will find in my work) are considered, can you say, as you do, that, "When the whole is put into the balance with the testimony of the Nicene fathers, it is no more than a grain against a hundred weight?"* Indeed, Sir, the things that ought to have been weighed were either never put into the balance, or it was held by a very unequal hand.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

Of the Degree of Christ's Divinity, and the Conclusion.

REV. SIR,

I CANNOT close these Letters without animadverting upon another circumstance on which you touch much too slightly. "My task," you say, "is barely to shew that the divinity of Jesus Christ was, in some sense or other, an original article of belief;"† and again, "In what precise sense I should understand his godhead, I might be puzzled to determine."‡

Had this language been addressed to the apostles, they would probably have replied, *Thou bringest strange things to our ears;* for they do not appear to me ever to have heard of such a thing as *kinds* or *degrees* of divinity. In the Scriptures nothing is said but of one kind of proper divinity. Mention is there made of *one true God*, and of *many false*

* *Letter*, p. 25. *P.*) † *Ibid.* p. 5. (*P.*) ‡ *Ibid.* p. 33. (*P.*)

gods, but of no *inferior kind of true God*. We read of *God*, and of *creatures;* but of nothing of an intermediate nature. *Moses*, indeed, and magistrates in general, are called *gods*, but it is only by way of figure. There was nothing divine in their *natures;* and in this sense all men may be termed gods, with respect to brute creatures. If this be all the divinity that you ascribe to Christ, I shall certainly have no objection to it. Being my Lord and Master, he is, in this sense, also my God; but in no other. But as he is never, in any sense, called *God* in the Scriptures, I do not think myself authorized to use that language.

If, therefore, Christ be God at all, in the sense in which the sacred writers use the term God, he must have every essential attribute of divinity. He must be self-existent, eternal, omnipresent, omniscient, and almighty, the maker and constant preserver of all things. Nay more, if more can be said, he must be *the one God and Father of all*, even the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. For the Scriptures know no other God besides this.

The whole doctrine of *inferior gods*, such as the *Platonizing* fathers made Christ to be, is downright *Heathen*, and a manifest departure from *the faith* originally *delivered to the saints*. According to this true faith, there is but *one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man* (not the inferior God) *Christ Jesus*. But from being an inferior God, in the space of about two centuries, (for it required that time to advance such a step,) this inferior God became, in the imagination of Christians, to be God equal to the Father.

Shocked at this sentiment, learned Christians seem now to be very generally endeavouring to get back to the doctrine of an *inferior God*, and for this purpose some become *Arians*, and others endeavour to make out *kinds* and *degrees* in divinity, as there are kinds and degrees among creatures. But reason and common sense revolt at the supposition; and be assured, the Christian world will not be able to find any rest, till they go back to the primitive doctrine of *one God*, and of *men approved of God*, by signs and wonders which God did by them. I believe Christ to be *a prophet mighty in word and deed*, a man whom God sent, by whom God spake, whom God raised from the dead, and who will come again in the glory and power of God his Father, to raise the dead, to judge the world, and to give to every man according to his works.

This, Sir, is the Christianity which I profess, and it is a religion as plain as it is practical. It is worthy of God, and

approves itself to the reason of man. And why should we be fond of a *faith* with which *reason* is at variance, and to which it must be sacrificed? Is this a sacrifice pleasing to God? Can we wonder at the number of sensible *unbelievers* in the Christian world, when they find that they must abandon their reason before they can adopt religion, which is the case when such doctrines as the *Trinity*, (that of three divine persons in one God,) are held out to them, and they are told that they cannot be Christians without receiving them? While this is our conduct, with one hand we invite men to come within the pale of the church, while with the other we shut the door against them. This door, I wish to throw fairly open, and therefore I invite men to bring their reason with them when they become Christians, and by no means to leave it behind them.

Far would I be from drawing off your attention from the *great work* in which you are engaged, and from which I have the greatest expectations, in consequence of believing you to be singularly qualified for it. Your *Prospectus*,* which I read with wonder and delight, is a pledge of it. But if you could find leisure, I could wish that you would at least attempt the execution of what you suppose may be done, when you say, "It would not, I imagine, be a very difficult, though it would be a tedious task, to refute all the arguments and answer all the objections which your party have been long employed in collecting, from those store-houses, (the Christian fathers,) and which you, Sir, have summed up in so masterly a manner in your last great work. With abilities far inferior to yours, I could, if at leisure, erect, from the same materials out of which you have reared so specious an edifice, a fabric of a different order, as plausible, I trust, and compact as yours, without being under the suspicious necessity of garbling and rejecting as you have done."†

This language, Sir, is by no means of a piece with the liberality of the rest of your letter, and should not have been

* "Prospectus of a new Translation of the Holy Bible, from connected Texts of the Originals, compared with the ancient Versions: with various Readings, explanatory Notes, and critical Observations," 4to. 1786. See *Mem. of Geddes*, pp. 88—145.

Of this translation Dr. Geddes finished and published, in 2 volumes 4to., 1793 and 1797, the Old Testament to the end of *Ruth*, with "the prayer of Manasseh." In 1800, he added, in one volume 4to., "Critical Remarks on the Hebrew Scriptures—containing the Pentateuch." In 1801, "the Translator died, in the midst of his version of the Psalms," which have since been published. See *ibid.* pp. xiii. —xv., 330—396. In Vol. XI. are numerous references to Dr. Geddes's *Translation* and *Critical Remarks*.

† *Letter*, p. 34. (*P.*)

used without proof. Many a tedious volume as I have *looked through*, at least a hundred folios, *Greek* or *Latin*, without counting those of smaller size, I am not conscious of having, in any proper sense of the word, *garbled* any of them, or of having *rejected* any thing that could throw light on my subject, whether it made for or against me; though I may have *overlooked* passages of both kinds. On this account, I most sincerely wish that others may go over the same ground after me, and with more discerning eyes.

As you think, however, that, without taking so much trouble, the materials that I have collected would serve to construct a fabric of a different nature, I wish you would try to make them answer the purpose you mention. But I am confident you might as soon take down the elegant cylindrical monument in Gracechurch Street, and with the same stones erect a *parallelopepidon*. If you should not be able to command sufficient leisure yourself, I wish you would persuade some other learned person of your communion to undertake the work, and assist him with your counsel.

As I believe you to be a man of a truly candid and ingenuous mind, and that you really write as I do, for the sake of promoting truth,* I flatter myself that you will not fail to let me, and the public, hear from you again on the subject. If you feel any force in my reply, have the honest courage to acknowledge it. If not, let us know what armour it is that defends you. In this I ask no more than I hold myself ready to give to you, or any other of my opponents. It is what all writers owe to that most respectable tribunal, before which we are pleading, the Christian world. We ought, therefore, to acknowledge our cause to be untenable, if we think it to be so, as well as to defend it while we think it defensible. As for myself, like an honest general, successful or unsuccessful, I will give as fair an account of my *killed* and *wounded*, as of the *trophies* I may gain, or the *prisoners* I may take.

With the truest respect,
I am, Rev. Sir,
Yours sincerely,
J. PRIESTLEY.

Birmingham, December, 1787.

* As appears by the following conclusion: a passage quoted by Dr. Geddes's biographer:

"I cannot allow myself to believe that the divinity of Jesus will ever be without defenders, or that its ablest defenders will not be Englishmen; but let its defenders be mild and moderate; let them imitate the conduct of him whose cause they undertake to plead; let not their zeal, however fervent, transport them beyond

LETTERS

TO

THE REV. DR. PRICE.

LETTER I.

Of the Influence of the Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity on that concerning the Person of Christ.

DEAR FRIEND,

I CANNOT forbear acknowledging the satisfaction I have received from the perusal of the *Appendix* to your late *Sermons*,* in which, with a candour that does you the greatest honour, you have, as you say, stated "some of the most important" of Dr. Priestley's arguments, "that our readers may be better able to form their judgment on the points about which we differ."†

the bounds of decency and decorum. Their style will not be the less nervous, because it is void of asperity; nor their arguments the less conclusive, because unmixt with injuries. To discover Truth is professedly the aim of us all: let us pursue the path that seems the most likely to lead us to her abode, with ardour but not with animosity; and if we be convinced that we have been happy enough to find it out, let us not insult those who, in our estimation, may have been less successful. *Non contumeliis et probris vexemus alii alios; sed honestè positisque præjudiciis, causam disceptemus.*" See *Mem. of Geddes*, pp. 174, 175.

* "Containing Notes occasioned by Dr. Priestley's Letters to Dr. Price."

† Sermons *(Appendix)*, 1787, p. 371. *(P.)* This passage forms part of the following Address which Dr. Price prefixed to his *Appendix*.

"*To the Rev. Dr. Priestley.*

"DEAR FRIEND,

"I am happy in the opportunity which the republication of my Sermons gives me to express my gratitude to you for the notice you have taken of them in your letters to me, lately published. I have considered your remarks with the attention due to all you write. I feel most sensibly the affection with which you have offered them; and I think myself particularly obliged to you for allowing me to keep the resolution I have formed not to engage in a controversy. My intention, therefore, in the following Notes, is, not to answer your arguments, but chiefly to state some of the most important of them, that our readers may be better able to form their judgments on the points about which we differ.

"You, Sir, are in various respects so distinguished as to be above any competition of which I am capable. There is, however, a merit in which I can claim an equal share with you: and that is the merit of giving the public an example (little known among religious men) of two friends who, considering nothing as essential but a sincere desire to know and follow truth, preserve an invariable respect for one another, notwithstanding very great differences of opinion on religious subjects.

"I am, &c.

"*Hackney*, July 17, 1787."

It is, I believe, our joint and earnest wish, that the public may form a right judgment in the case; and, therefore, I shall, without any apology, make a few remarks upon the view that you have given of my arguments. On several of the heads you have contented yourself with simply reciting them, and, with an almost unexampled generosity, have left them, without making any reply, to make what impression they may upon our readers. In other cases you have been led, perhaps unintentionally, farther into the controversy, and in these I shall take the liberty to accompany you.

You say, that you and I "cannot agree" on the subject of the *creation of all things by Christ*, because I suppose that there is but *one proper agent in nature;* the whole being a piece of machinery depending upon the sole will of that great Being who framed the whole and put it in motion.* This I do indeed acknowledge, and I consider it as a great and glorious truth, without which all would be darkness, confusion and despair. But it appears to me that this has nothing at all to do with our present discussion; because, as *Arians* or *Unitarians*, the question between us is simply whether the volitions of Christ (originating in himself or in another) gave birth to the universe.

You may as well say that you and I can never agree about the author of any particular book, your own *Sermons*, for instance; for that, if there be but one agent in the universe, *he* was the only proper author of them. But upon this principle, he was also the author of my remarks upon them. Admitting that there is a sense in which God is the author of every thing, good and evil, there is likewise a certain and definite sense, in which there are other, and very different agents, and which will allow us to say, that your *Sermons* were written by *you*, and my *Remarks* on them by me.

Now, it is only in this sense that we are to consider whether Christ made the world; and I may as well say that he did *not* make it, believing that it existed before he himself was made, as you that he *did* make it, believing as you do, that he existed before it was made, and that his volitions and exertions were, in some way or other, instrumental in making it. Here, therefore, is a clear ground of argument and discussion between us, and my being an advocate for

* *Appendix*, p. 374. (*P.*) Dr. Price's words are, "He," (Dr. Priestley,) "believing the intelligent creation to be nothing but a machinery consisting of matter so arranged as to think and reason, will not allow that there is a proper agent in nature, except the Deity himself." *Ibid.* For this opinion Dr. Price refers to the *Free Discussion* which has appeared in Vol. IV.

the doctrine of Philosophical Necessity, and you for that of Philosophical Liberty, has nothing to do with it. The one is a question between us as *metaphysicians*, and the other as *theologians*. Do not, therefore, say, as you do on *this account*, "How, then, can it be possible for us to think alike of the nature and dignity of Christ, and of the importance of his agency?" You must know that, notwithstanding every difference in this respect, many persons have thought alike on this subject; many *Necessarians* having been *Arians*, and many of their opponents *Unitarians*.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

Of the Propriety of praying to Christ on Arian Principles.

DEAR FRIEND,

I HAD maintained that, upon the Arian principles which you defend, Christ ought to be considered as a proper object of *religious worship*.* "This," you say, I asserted "on the supposition that a believer of this doctrine believes also the creation of this world, and all its dependencies, by Christ, in such a sense as to imply that he supports all things by the word of his power,—that he is always present with us," &c. But you add, "he who will consider what I have said on the subject of the formation of the world by Christ, may find that I have no such ideas as these of it."†

That I should be thought to have, in any respect, misstated your opinion, or to have drawn any unfair conclusion from it, gave me much concern, because both were equally remote from my intention; but after a careful reperusal of your *Sermons*, I must own that I cannot help seeing them in the same light, and therefore being of opinion, that what you advanced will fully authorize the conclusion I then drew from it.

You apply to Christ what is said in *Hebrews* i. 1, &c. *John* i. 1, &c. and *Col.* i. 16, &c.‡ Now, in the first of these passages it is expressly said, that *he upholds all things by the word of his power;* and whether you understand this of his own proper power, or that of God his Father, it certainly implies his constant inspection of, and intimate pre-

* See *supra*, pp. 383, 384.

† *Appendix*, p. 374. *(P.)*

‡ In *Sermons*, pp. 140, 141. *(P.)*

sence with, every thing that he has made; which, you say, comprehends this world and all its dependencies.

In the second passage, not only is it said that "all things were made by him," (i. e. the *Logos,)* and "without him was not any thing made that was made," but that "in him was life, and the life was the light of men." And in the last of the three passages it is said, that Christ "is before all things, and by him all things consist."

Surely, then, in them is contained, even *totidem verbis*, the very proposition which you so strongly disclaim; so that, admitting the creation of the world by Christ, I do not see how you can hesitate to admit that *he upholdeth all things by the word of his power*, that he is *the giver of life*, and that *by him all things consist;* and, consequently, that he is possessed of every attribute that is requisite to constitute him a proper object of religious worship, viz. omniscience, and a capacity to supply all our wants. He must be able to hear and answer all our prayers.

Besides, the sacred writers always ascribe the *government* of the world to the *Maker* of it, whoever he be. The same Being is our *maker* and *preserver*, and we are expressly required to *worship*, and *bow down*, and *kneel* before him, as such. In whatever sense, therefore, it be true that Christ is our *maker*, in the same sense he must be our *governor*, *preserver*, and *benefactor*, and therefore justly entitled to what we call *religious homage*.

You say, indeed, "It should not be forgotten, that by *religious worship* I mean prayer addressed to an invisible Being, supposed always present with us, and the disposer of our lot. The honour, obedience, and gratitude, therefore, which we owe to Christ, do not amount to religious worship. The former is a part of our duty as Christians; the latter we ought to confine to that ONE invisible Being, who is the supreme disposer of the lots of all beings, and of whom alone we know that he is a constant witness to our thoughts and wishes."*

Now, upon the *Arian* hypothesis, must not Christ, who actually made Adam and all men, and who, though in a manner incomprehensible, and invisible to us, *supports all things by the word of his power*, be always, and most intimately present with us? And *having all power both in heaven and in earth*, though as the gift of God, is he not the immediate disposer of our lot? That he is not the *supreme* and *ultimate* disposer

* *Appendix*, p. 382. *(P.)*

of it, does not exclude him from being the proper object of our addresses. If so, a child ought never to have recourse to his own father, but to God only, on whom both himself and his father depend.

Accordingly, the propriety and obligation of praying to Christ has been actually felt and acknowledged by all *Arians* till the present times. They have always paid him a worship which they usually termed *mediatorial*, to distinguish it from that which they conceived to be appropriated to his God and Father. I am informed that it was the constant practice of as reputable a person as any among the *Arians*, or any Christian ministers now living, I mean Mr. Micaiah Towgood, of Exeter, to address a prayer to Christ whenever he administered the *Lord's Supper*. In this he acted in perfect consistency with his principles. For, why should he not pray to a Being who, he believed, (though as the instrument, and by the command of God,) actually made and supports him, who must, of course, though invisible, be present to him, and who is to be his final judge ?*

I must therefore maintain, that it is the necessary consequence of *Arian* principles that Christ be considered as the proper object of religious worship, and that his not being proposed to us in that character by the sacred writers, is a proof that they were not *Arians;* and that, however we may now understand their language, they did not really mean to say that he was the maker of the visible world ; and, consequently, that this is no genuine doctrine of revelation.

Since, then, Christ, on the principles of *Arianism*, is both the proper object of religious worship, and also expressly called *God*, even that God *by whom all things were made*, I cannot help saying that *Arians* believe in more gods than

* Mr. Towgood "conceived of Jesus Christ as the very first being whom the power of the Father called into existence—by whom he afterwards made the worlds, and frequently appeared under the Jewish dispensation;" hence "he concluded him to be a proper object of worship," which he "termed *mediatorial* worship." Yet, "as the scripture, in no instance, expressly requires that Christ should be addressed in prayer, and as many of the society with which Mr. Towgood was connected, considered all worship of Christ as improper, though he himself thought it defensible, he did not think it a duty, and very seldom, if ever, practised it in public." Mr. Manning's "Sketch of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Michaiah Towgood," in *Prot. Diss. Mag.* 1794, I. p. 429.

Mr. Towgood appears to have taken a lively interest in "the controversy between Dr. Horsley and Dr. Priestley." Writing to his biographer, "four or five years before he died," he says, "I shall be glad to see any future publication of theirs, for when there is a collision of two such great bodies in the ecclesiastical hemisphere, it is to be hoped some beams of light will be struck out to guide us in the way of truth." *Ibid.* p. 428. This venerable man closed a highly exemplary life, more than sixty years of which he had passed in the Christian ministry, in 1792, aged 91.

one, and, therefore, that they are by no means entitled to the appellation of *Unitarians*. All that you can say is, that one of your gods is subordinate to the other. But such was also the belief of the Pagans; and upon this principle they might disclaim the appellation of *Polytheists* or *Idolaters*. When the *Logos* is called *God*, it is evidently in a very different sense from that in which *Moses* is called "a God to Pharoah,"* or in which men may be called gods with respect to brute animals. There is no *comparison*, or figure of speech, implied in the former case, as there evidently is in the latter. The *Logos* is truly and properly God, both in *name* and *power*.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

Of the Silence of the Three First Evangelists concerning the Doctrine of the Incarnation, and of the Doctrine of the Primitive Ages of Christianity.

DEAR FRIEND,

I AM rather surprised that you, who do not pretend to believe the universal inspiration, or the infallibility, of the apostles, should lay so much stress as you do on the literal interpretation of a very few particular passages in their writings, and at the same time overlook *general considerations*, suggested by their writings, which appear to me to be of infinitely more moment in deciding the question between us. The silence of the three first evangelists on the subject of the incarnation of Christ must appear, if properly attended to, of more real consequence in supporting my opinion than a hundred such particular texts as you allege can be in support of yours. Only ask yourself whether, with your present ideas on the subject, you could sit down, and deliberately write an account of Christ, for the use of strangers and posterity, without ever calling him any thing more than a *man*, or a *prophet*, and without saying any thing of his incarnation; when you knew (as the evangelists must have done) that to the persons for whose use you wrote, the doctrine must have been absolutely novel, and must have appeared in the highest degree wonderful. And yet, of all the evangelists, it is *John* only who, without expressly asserting it, is thought to *allude* to this astonishing circumstance relating

* *Exod.* vii. 1. See Vol. XI. p. 132.

to their common Master, a circumstance which, in the opinion of all *Arians*, does him such infinite honour, and exhibits the Christian scheme to such advantage, that every thing short of it is considered as little better than Deism.

Without this doctrine you *Arians* even think the force of Christ's example to be greatly lessened. "His quitting his pre-existent dignity, and degrading himself to the condition of mortal man, in order to save men," you consider as "an instance of benevolence to which we can conceive no parallel," and "which is probably the admiration of angels."* And yet you will not find even in *John*, that our Saviour makes any merit of this condescension, as an instance of his love for the human race; though it is evident he did not wish to conceal any circumstance that would tend to enhance the value of it in the esteem of his disciples; for he, justly and repeatedly, enlarges on the greatness of his love for them. Now, what is it that he himself mentions as the greatest evidence of it? It is his laying down his life for them, which is what any other man might have done, and which we are expressly required, by his example, to do for one another. But what was all this, in your idea, to his quitting his pre-existent dignity? The Bishop of Clogher, after describing the humiliation of Christ in assuming a human body, says, "And as he grew up into life, and his reason improved, this only served to make the terrible change and alteration of his condition so much the more perceptible, and the recollection of it so much the more grievous and insufferable. The dreadfulness of which state is hardly conceivable to us, because that we were never sensible of any thing better than our present existence. But for any being, which had ever enjoyed the happiness of heaven, and had been in possession of *glory with the Father*, to be deprived thereof, and to be sent to dwell here, in this world, encompassed within the narrow limits of this earthly tabernacle, and the heavy organs made of flesh and blood, it must, literally speaking, be to such a being a hell upon earth."†

But why do we find nothing of this in the Evangelists? If you will look into an excellent article lately published in the *Theological Repository*, you will see that, much as we read in the Scriptures concerning the love of Christ to us,

* *Sermons*, pp. 153, 154. (*P.*)

† Bp. Clayton's "Vindication of the Histories of the Old and New Testament," 1759, (Pt. iii. Let. vii.,) p. 483. *Lardner* has remarked on other passages of the *Vindication*. See his "Second Postscript," *Works*, XI. pp. 180—196.

and also concerning our love to him, the ground of it is never said to be that with which you feel yourself so "deeply impressed."* This writer examines every text in which mention is made of the love of Christ, through the whole of the *New Testament*, and he no where finds any mention of, or allusion to, a greater ground for it than his love to us, manifested by his suffering and dying for us.† Could the greater ground that strikes your imagination so much, viz. his condescension to become incarnate for us, have been overlooked by all these writers, if, in their idea, this great event had ever taken place? Your own feelings and conduct demonstrate it to be impossible.

In one single passage indeed, 2 *Cor.* viii. 9, we read, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."‡ But the phrases *being rich*, and *being poor*, are not synonymous to a state of *pre-existent glory* on the one hand, and a voluntary *abdication* of it on the other, though such an interpretation suits your hypothesis. *Unitarians*, you know, think the passage admits of a different and more natural interpretation, agreeable to their principles. At *any* rate, however, you would never rest a doctrine of this magnitude on the supposed meaning of a single expression, manifestly figurative.

Consider, also, the near connexion there is between the supposed *miraculous conception* of Christ and his *incarnation*, and say whether it be at all probable, that any person professing to write the history of the former, as *Luke* does, and *Matthew* is supposed to do, should relate the particulars of it, and not mention the latter, if they had known any thing of it? Do any *Arians*, even now, (without writing a regular history of Christ, but only incidentally mentioning the subject, as in sermons and other discourses,) ever speak of this body miraculously prepared for him, without mentioning the dignity of the inhabitant for whom it was prepared? If you attend to the subject, the silence of these two evangelists concerning the doctrine of incarnation cannot but appear extraordinary, even to yourself. In my opinion, *Mark* could not have failed to have mentioned the miracu-

* *Sermons*, p. 155. (*P.*)

† See "An Essay on the grounds of Love to Christ," *Theol. Repos.* VI. pp. 284—302. The writer, Dr. Toulmin, republished this Essay as an *Appendix* to his "Practical Efficacy of the Unitarian Doctrine," *Ed.* 2, 1801, pp. 103—127.

‡ See Vol. XIV. pp. 177, 178.

lous conception in his history of Christ, had he ever heard of *that*, and much less would any of the evangelists have suppressed the mention of so much more wonderful a circumstance relating to their Master, as that of his *incarnation*, if they had known any thing about it.

"How important," you also very naturally say, "must the service be which Christ," as a being of a very superior nature to man, "came to perform!"* And yet it is never described in terms that give us an idea of its being more than any other man might have performed. He preached, he declared the will of God, and performed miracles in his name, (at the same time expressly declaring what, according to your system, must have been an equivocation, that *he could do nothing of himself*, and that *the Father within him did the works,)* and lastly he died, and, by the power of God his Father, he was raised from the dead. Now is not all this predicable of a *man*, and does it not best suit the character of a *man*, a "man," as *Peter* calls him, "approved of God—by wonders and signs, which God did by him"?†

Permit me now to make use of another argument, and though you may think it has no great weight, yet appears to me to have much more than the literal interpretation of a hundred such particular texts as those on which you lay so much stress. It is well known that *ideas* frequently recurring to the mind will soon find proper corresponding *terms*. This was the case with the doctrine of the *Trinity*, that of *transubstantiation*, and many others. Here you agree with me that the *doctrines*, and the corresponding *terms*, made their appearance about the same time, and that this circumstance is a proof of the novelty of those doctrines with respect to the age of the apostles? Now is not the argument just as good when applied to the doctrine of *incarnation* in general? If *John's* phraseology of *the word becoming flesh* had been generally understood to mean the assumption of a human body by a superangelic spirit, it would not have long remained in that state of *circumlocution*. Had the idea been on the minds of Christians in the whole of the apostolic age, as much as it was in the third and fourth centuries, and as it is upon your own mind at present, it could not have failed, in my opinion, very soon to have produced the more concise and expressive term *incarnation*. It would soon have been the burden of the song with both the enemies and

* *Sermons*, p. 155. *(P.)* † *Acts* ii. 22. See Vol. XIII. pp. 393, 394.

the friends of Christianity. But no such thing appears, though we find it immediately on the *Platonizing* fathers having got the notion of a *personified logos*.

No such terms as *personified logos*, or *incarnation*, are to be found in the writings of the apostles. Whenever they speak of Christ they always call him *a man;* and certainly the term *superangelic Being*, or some equivalent expression, would have escaped them some time or other, if they had conceived it to be applicable to him. The author of the epistle to the *Hebrews** speaks of him as, in his nature, "a little lower than the angels," (quoting from the *Psalmist* an expression applied to men in general,) though he speaks of him as in *dignity* advanced far above them. Now would he not as readily have said that he was in nature, as well as in rank and pre-eminence, by divine appointment, superior to angels, if he had really thought him to be so? Some of *Paul's* epistles were written near thirty years after he had devoted his whole time to the propagation of the gospel, and there are other writings in the *New Testament* of a still later date; and yet in none of them do you find the proper term by which you now express the most wonderful, and the most important doctrine of the Christian system. Is there nothing extraordinary in this, if the doctrine be really true?

But the argument to which I wish more particularly to draw the attention of learned Christians, is that which I derive from the state of things in the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles; considering the opinion of the great body of Christians, in that early age, as one good method of ascertaining what was the doctrine of the apostles, and consequently the true sense of their writings. Now I maintain, that no such opinion as that for which you contend had any existence till the beginning of the fourth century. Before that time, viz. about the beginning of the second century, the *Platonizing* Christians had adopted the idea of the divinity of Christ, as the *personified, but uncreated, logos of the Father*, united to a human body and a human soul, while the common people held the original doctrine of the *simple humanity* of Christ; but I assert that your opinion, viz. that the intelligent principle in Christ was of a *superangelic nature*, and yet *created out of nothing*, that it superseded the use of a proper *human soul*, and that such a created being was the creator of the world under God, was not adopted by any sect of Christians whatever, learned or

* *Ch.* ii. 9. See Vol. XIV. p. 353.

unlearned, till about the time of *Arius*. And, could the true doctrine of the apostles have been immediately lost, and have remained unknown to all the Christian world, from their time till so late a period? In all this time were there no Christians who understood the true sense of the Scriptures on a subject which was the universal topic of discussion, as it has been from that age to this day? On this topic, I have long called for the reply of learned *Arians*, of this and other countries, but hitherto I have called in vain.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

Of Arguments from particular Texts, and those drawn from the Reason of Things; and of the Connexion between any Opinion concerning the Person of Christ and the Belief of Christianity in general.

DEAR FRIEND,

YOU are pleased to say, that mine is "the only *Socinian* doctrine" which you "could adopt," if you were to leave your "present sentiments, without rejecting Christianity."* I cannot wonder at this, because it appears to me to be by far the most rational system of Christianity, and being the most *defensible*, it is such as those who hold it, are the least likely to give up. But I see nothing of the "superior sense in *discerning*," or the "superior candour in *acknowledging*" it, which you ascribe to me.† It is only discerning and acknowledging that a man is a man, that without divine illumination one man could not *know* more than any other man, and that without supernatural assistance he could not *do* more than another man.

So far am I from thinking that it requires any "torturing the Scriptures,"‡ to make them speak this language concerning Christ, that I think it is the only sense that can be put upon them without torture. It is the only one that is agreeable to the uniform tenor of them. On the contrary, your opinion of one man being the maker of the world, and of all other men, though I once believed it myself, now appears to me a most extravagant *hypothesis*, answering no purpose but that of giving a literal interpretation to a very few texts, which much more naturally admit a different construction.

* *Appendix*, pp. 391, 392 *(P.)* † *Ibid.* p. 392. ‡ *Ibid.*

For you must know that, in many cases, the *literal* interpretation of an expression is, of all others, the most *unnatural.*

If you look off from those *few texts*, and attend to the *reason of things*, which is better than a hundred commentators, you cannot so much as imagine any reason why the redemption of mankind from *superstition* and *sin*, with its attendant *death* (which is the only redemption that is spoken of in the Scriptures) should require the incarnation of such a being as your *Logos;* and you give up many advantages which arise from the idea of a man like ourselves being employed as a messenger from God to man. In my opinion, the *Trinitarian* doctrine is much more plausibly supported both by passages of scripture (for its advocates quote ten for your one) and by reason; as they allege that sin, being of an infinite magnitude, requires an infinite satisfaction; so that your *Logos*, or even Dr. Clarke's, the eternal creator of the whole universe, was unequal to it.

To you, I know, I need to make no apology for this freedom; and I am persuaded you will bear with me if I say farther, that as the *Arian* hypothesis rose considerably later than the *Trinitarian*, so I doubt not it will vanish before it. I do not expect to see the extinction of the Trinitarian doctrine, because it has got such hold of the common people, and has also the support of the civil powers; but, according to the course of nature, I may hope to see an Arian considered as a rare phenomenon.

You have done me justice, and yourself credit, by producing at length my arguments for supposing that by the power given to Christ, of raising the dead and judging the world, nothing more was meant than such a power as might have been imparted to any other man.* But I wish you had offered something in reply to them before you had pronounced, as you do, that my scheme is such as cannot be admitted "without either torturing the Scriptures, or renouncing their authority."†

In my opinion, and that of many others, what you have quoted from my *Letters* is an easy and natural account of the phraseology on which you build so much, and an illustration of it by its actual use on different occasions. For this I appeal to our common readers; as also, whether the insinuation of any danger of renouncing the authority of the Scriptures ought to have been thrown out so lightly.

* See *supra*, pp. 399—403, quoted by Dr. Price in *Appendix*, pp. 386—390.
† *Appendix*, p. 392. (*P.*)

For it may be supposed that, in your serious opinion, the belief of Christianity itself is incompatible with my idea of it.

Indeed, my friend, we are not qualified to judge for one another in this case. Otherwise, considering how incredible your doctrine appears to me, viz. that of a created being, in the form of a man, and not at all distinguishable from other men by any visible property or circumstance whatever, (one who was born and died; who ate, drank, and slept, like other men, and who did nothing that any other man, equally aided by God, might not have done,) being the creator of the world, I might be tempted to say that no scheme can be true which supposes it: for it is not possible that your mind should more revolt at my opinion, than mine does at yours.

But I check myself before I draw any such conclusion. For the plain historical evidence of the certainty of those facts which establish the truth of Christianity, is so very clear and strong, that though I should see that the belief of them would draw after it the belief of that doctrine, I should not hesitate to embrace it; so that I should very contentedly, and thankfully, be an *Arian* rather than no Christian. Indeed, so unspeakably valuable is the great hope of the gospel, the revelation of a future life, that I would admit almost the whole system of Popery, and shut my eyes to every thing that only appeared *incomprehensible*, and not an absolute *contradiction*, rather than abandon it. And, notwithstanding what you have here and elsewhere incautiously dropped, I am confident, you would consent to be not only almost, but altogether, what I am, an *Unitarian*, a *Necessarian*, and even a *Materialist*, rather than no Christian at all. By this time you must have seen that I am far from being singular in my opinions; and you cannot say that *as yet* there appears any ground of apprehension from them. Of the dead we may speak, and where was there a better Christian than Dr. Jebb?

But though with myself, and some others, who were both educated Christians, and have given particular attention to the evidences of Christianity, they will preponderate against these difficulties, it may not be the case with all. Many persons will very naturally first consider what is proposed to them, before they give any attention to the *evidence* for it at all; and when they are told, that if they embrace Christianity they must believe that the world was made by an inhabitant of *Judea*, (for in that light, however the thing

may be disguised and softened to your mind, it will appear to them,) it is very possible the business may end there, and they may inquire no farther about it. If this be made a necessary preliminary, I am satisfied, from my own observations, that we must for ever despair of the conversion of the Jews.

This was not the case with *Arianism* when it was started; for it found the world in the belief of *pre-existence* and *incarnation;* so that neither philosophers nor the vulgar saw any thing to object to it on that account. But the case is widely different now.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

Of the Meaning of John vi. 62, *and of Christ divesting himself of the Power of working Miracles.*

DEAR FRIEND,

YOU say, that "*John* vi. 62, 'Does this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?'" is "as decisive a declaration of Christ's pre-existence by himself as words can well express."* But the phrases "this is my body,"† and "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you," [*John* vi. 53,] are as express declarations of the doctrine of *Transubstantiation.* Also what our Lord says of the *Comforter*, literally interpreted, is as express a declaration of the personality of the *Holy Spirit.* And yet you receive neither of these doctrines. He says, (*John* xvi. 7, 13, 14,) "If I depart, I will send him unto you," and "he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."‡ On your principle, of literal interpretation, we have here an account of a person clearly distinct from God, or Christ.

If we will allow of no figures of speech in such books as those of scripture, we must admit the greatest absurdities. And you cannot feel more reluctance to admit the figurative interpretation of this passage in *John* than *Luther* felt to give a similar interpretation to those passages which seem to assert the real presence of Christ in the eucharist; as you

* *Appendix*, p. 392. (*P.*)
† *Matt.* xxvi. 26. See Vol. XIII. p. 310.
‡ See Vol. XIII. p. 326.

may see in "The History of the Reformation" by *Beausobre*, a work * which I have just perused with the greatest satisfaction.

On *Carolstadt's* defending the doctrine of *Zuinglius* on the subject of the eucharist, he said, "Two persons wrote to me on the same subject, and even treated it with more ability than *Carolstadt*, not torturing the words of scripture as he did; but I find that I am taken, and have no way to escape. For the text of the evangelist is too plain, and too express, to admit of any other sense."† And when the *Landgrave* proposed a conference at *Marpurg* between the *German* and *Swiss* divines on the subject, "Luther premised that he would not depart from the literal sense of the words, *This is my body*, because they appeared too clear and express to admit any other, and that he would not hear sense or reason, when God had spoken."‡

The whole discourse in which this expression, on which you lay so much stress, occurs, is full of the strongest figures.§ For good reasons, no doubt, our Lord seems to have intended by it to stagger and confound his hearers. All the disciples, except the twelve, absolutely left him upon it, and even they were in great danger of being offended, And it is an expression in this very enigmatical discourse, (continued indeed, but in the same strain, after the multitude had left him,) a discourse in which nothing is expressed in a natural manner, that you insist must be interpreted literally.

Besides, the literal interpretation of this very passage, does not in reality accord with the sentiments of *Arians*, or of any sect of Christians, except those of the *Polish Socinians:* for it would imply that *the human nature of Christ* had been in heaven; because it is said, not that *the Son of God* but that *the Son of Man* had been there.‖ Besides, the phrase, *where he was before*, is not synonymous to *heaven*, nor is the *time* when the Son of Man was there, or any where else, mentioned in this passage; so that much must be *supplied* before it can be made to say much to your purpose.

Though I reject your interpretation of this text, I do not pretend to be quite satisfied with any other interpretation of it. I am, however, abundantly satisfied that yours is not the true one. And this is far from being the only text about which the best critics cannot entirely please themselves.

* In French, "printed at Berlin in 1785." See the "Preface by the Translator" into English, Dr. Macaulay, 1801.

† *Hist.* III. p. 124. (*P.*)

‡ *Ibid.* IV. p. 148. (*P.*)

§ See Vol. XIII. pp. 159—161.

‖ See *ibid.* p. 161.

For my part, I should much sooner have recourse to the idea of Christ's actual ascent into heaven, or of his imagining that he had been carried up thither, in a vision, which (like that of *Paul)* he had not been able to distinguish from a reality, at the time that he received his commission, than to yours, of his having existed in an unembodied state before the creation of the world, and his having left some state of great dignity and happiness, when he came hither.

That this *hypothesis* is no proper clue to our Lord's real meaning, is, I think, sufficiently evident, from the utter impossibility of the apostles understanding him to mean any such thing. For, no doubt, they, at that time, considered their Master, though the *Messiah*, as a mere man, who had no more pre-existed than they themselves had.

I cannot help observing, on this occasion, that neither yourself, nor any other person, has attempted any solution of the difficulty I suggested, from the silence of the writers of the *New Testament* with respect to the discovery of the pre-existent dignity of Christ, whenever it was made to them. To have been informed that Jesus, with whom they had lived in the greatest intimacy as a *brother*, was their *maker*, must have astonished them as much as if they had been told that *John the Baptist* had been that great super-angelic Being; because they were no more prepared to receive the one than the other. But what traces do you perceive of the apostles being impressed, as they must necessarily have been, upon the discovery of a thing of so extraordinary a nature? How must such an opinion have been ridiculed by the unbelieving Jews! And what marks do we find, in the *Acts of the Apostles*, of their having so much as heard of such an opinion being advanced by any Christians? It is as evident from this consideration as any negative can be, that no such opinion as that of Christ having been the maker of the world, was ever taught by the apostles; and therefore any interpretation of their writings, which implies their teaching it, must be wrong, whether we be able to hit upon the true sense of them or not.

To be explicit with you, I would not, as you say, build "an article of faith of such magnitude, on the *correctness* of John's recollection and representation of our Lord's language."* So strange and incredible does your *hypothesis* appear to me, that rather than admit it, I would suppose the whole verse to be an interpolation, or that the old apostle

* *Appendix*, p. 394. (*P.*)

dictated one thing, and his *amanuensis* wrote another; for you would not scruple to say as much if you had found any passage, in which it was said that *Moses*, or any of the old prophets, had been the maker of the world.

As to the difficulty which you suggest about Christ "divesting himself of the power of working miracles,"* when he never properly had any such power, (which in your excellent Sermon on "the resurrection of Lazarus," you yourself admit,) † it is, in my apprehension, no difficulty at all. Had Jesus (to suppose an impossibility) been inclined to exert a miraculous power of an improper kind, or at an improper season, I have no doubt but that his inclination would have been over-ruled, by that great Being by whose power alone he acknowledged that the miracles were wrought. But when his will perfectly coincided with that of his Father, it is not at all extraordinary, that he should be said to *renounce* a power which he had exercised, when he only ceased to request the farther use of it, from a full conviction that it ought not to be exercised any longer.

You say of "Christ, with respect to his power of working miracles," that "the gospel history gives us reason for believing that he possessed it more permanently, as well as in a higher degree, through that spirit which was given him without measure."‡ But still, if it was "through that spirit which was given him," it was no power of *his own*, and is therefore no argument for his pre-existent dignity and superior nature, but the contrary; for the same *might* have been imparted to any other man. Nay, he himself does virtually assert as much, when he says, that when he should be removed from them, his apostles would do greater things than he had done; for if they did greater things, they must have had greater power. If one passage must be interpreted literally, why not another? Have *Arians* the exclusive privilege of choosing what texts to interpret literally, and what figuratively? I am, &c.

* *Appendix*, p. 396. (*P.*)

† "After the stone was taken away, he made, we are told, a solemn address to God; and, lifting up his eyes, said, *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.* This implies, that his ability to work this miracle was the consequence of his having prayed for it." *Sermons*, p. 381. Yet Bishop Hall adduces even *the raising of Lazarus* among his proofs that Christ "hath abundantly convinced the world of his Godhead by miraculous works, so transcending the possibility of nature, that they could not be wrought by any lesse then the God of nature; as ejecting of devils by command; *raising the dead after degrees of putrefaction;* giving eyes to the borne blind," &c. *Satan's Fiery Darts Quenched*, 1647, pp. 9, 10. See *Christian Reformer*, 18 8, IV. pp. 267, 268.

‡ *Appendix*, p. 396. (*P.*)

LETTER VI.

Of the Influence of Prejudice and Imagination in interpreting Scripture.

DEAR FRIEND,

IN reading the history of controversies, which tends to throw great light on the principles of human nature, and the human mind, we are perpetually astonished at the gross mistakes of very able and very honest men; but the wonder always arises from our not placing ourselves precisely in their situation, and especially from our not considering the *fixed principles* they had acquired in their earliest years. Nothing surprises *Protestants* of the present day more than the difficulty with which the doctrine of *Transubstantiation* was abandoned by the first Reformers, an example of which we have in the conduct of *Luther*, mentioned above [p. 460]. But whatever a man's fixed principles are, and however they were acquired, he argues from them as indubitable maxims, and likewise interprets scripture by them.

Luther's conduct (however it may appear to us who were not educated with his prejudices) in his obstinately adhering to the literal interpretation of the words of Christ, is more excusable than that of the *Arians*, with respect to the doctrine of *creation by Christ;* because it is well known, that the term *creation* is used in the Scriptures in two senses, one of which implies nothing more than a *renovation*, or *change;* as when men are said to be "created in Christ Jesus,"* and God is said [*Isa.* lxv. 18,] to "create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." Consequently, we are not obliged by the use of any word, in the scripture sense of it, to suppose that Christ properly created any thing. And though the word *logos* is applied to Christ in the book of *Revelation*, where he is, or at least is supposed to be, meant by the person whose "name is called The Word of God,"† yet when *the word of God* is said to *create* any thing, it is never to be understood of Christ, but of the power of the Father only, as when it is said, [*Psalm* xxxiii. 6,] that "by the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."

On this account, I cannot help considering your literal

* *Ephes.* ii. 10. See Vol. XIV. p. 269.
† *Rev.* xix. 13. See Vol. XIV. p. 498.

interpretation of those texts which ascribe the creation of the material world to Christ as, in reality, *unnatural.* I cannot, however, help approving of your conduct in one respect, viz. in connecting the doctrine of the *pre-existence* of Christ, with that of his *creation of all things;* for certainly the same texts of scripture prove both, or neither. Besides, if no great office be ascribed to him before his incarnation, it cannot be known whether he was any thing more than a human soul, for which no body had been immediately provided, (and which, according to your idea of an unembodied soul, was altogether incapable of action, or even sensation,) so that all the *sublime* of the scheme, that which recommends it to many, absolutely vanishes.

There is in every general *scheme of Christianity*, (as you call the doctrine concerning the person of Christ,) something that forcibly strikes the imagination ; some *leading principle*, or maxim, which, whether it be expressly found in the words of scripture, or not, is at least supposed to be *implied*, and *alluded* to in them. Thus the *Trinitarians* think it absolutely necessary that " the infinite evil of sin be atoned for by the sufferings of an infinite Being ;" and though they find no such maxim in the Scriptures, (but in fact the contrary, as in all such passages as those in which God is said to forgive sins for *his own sake*, *his name's sake*, or *his mercy's sake,)* yet they cannot but think that Christ must necessarily be God, having something to do that God only could execute.

Others are struck with the idea of " the same person being the maker of the world, the medium of all the Divine communications with it, and finally the redeemer of it." They cannot, therefore, be satisfied without supposing Christ to be possessed of powers equal to the making of the world, and consequently to have been of a *superangelic* nature. Dr. Clarke even scrupled to call him a *creature*,* but considered

* See *Script. Doct.* Pt. ii. Sect. xiii. xiv. Ed. 3, 1732, pp. 266—274. In " a paper laid by Dr. Clarke before the Bishops," (the Upper House of Convocation,) " July 2, 1714," he says, " My opinion is, that the Son of God was eternally begotten by the eternal, incomprehensible *power* and *will* of the Father." Whiston's *Hist. Mem.* Ed. 3, 1748, p. 57; *Biog. Brit.* III. p. 602. Dr. Clarke, afterwards, in reply to an anonymous correspondent, adds the following explanation: " My intention in the first paragraph of the paper you are so much disturbed at, was not to assert any thing different from what I had before written ; but only to shew, that I did not in any of my books teach (as had by many been industriously reported) the doctrine of *Arius*, (viz. that *the Son of God was a creature, made out of nothing, just before the beginning of this world,*) but that he was begotten eternally, that is, without any limitation of time, (αχρονως, προ χρονων αιωνιων, προαιωνιως, προ παντων αιωνων,) in the incomprehensible duration of the Father's eternity: not by absolute *necessity of nature*, (which infers self-existence and independency,) but by the *power* and by the *will* of the Father." *Hist. Mem.* p. 61.

him as a kind of necessary appendage to the Almighty Father, as the hand by which he operated.

Nothing of this, however, is found in the Scriptures; and whenever mention is made of *the creation of the heavens or the earth*, it is always ascribed to the Father only, who "stretched out the heavens"* *by himself*, without any assistant, or instrument whatever; but still the idea is so splendid and captivating, that the imagination cannot quit it. You, however, compelled by the evidence of scripture, (which represents the Father as not having spoken to mankind *by his Son* till the *last days*,) content yourself with making Christ equal to the creation of the earth and its appendages, and fancy, (for you must excuse me, if, since it is not contained in the Scriptures, I say you only fancy,) that some mischief had been done to this world by an *angelic* being, which could only be repaired by a being of *superangelic* nature, though the mischief be undefinable, and the manner in which the remedy (viz. the death of Christ) operated, be equally undefinable, which certainly throws an obscurity over the scheme.

Lastly, others being staggered at the idea of Christ having made the heavens and the earth, (a province which he never claimed himself, and which is never expressly ascribed to him,) are satisfied with giving him *simple pre-existence*, without determining his rank in the scale of being, at all, or knowing when his being commenced. This I consider as the poorest of all schemes, and least worth contending for, as you also seem to think by not adopting it.

All this while, the simple doctrine of Christ being *a man*, though he is always so called in scripture, and he is always represented as having *felt* and *acted*, in all respects, like a man, assisted by God, is wholly overlooked, because there is nothing in it to strike the *imagination*. They see no grandeur or beauty in the scheme to make it desirable to them; and yet, in the writings of the apostle *Paul*, [1 *Cor.* xv. 21,] we find a general maxim which applies to no other scheme whatever, viz. that as "by man *comes* death, *so* by man *comes* also the resurrection of the dead." Thus, in my opinion, many, overlooking the plain sense of scripture, teach for doctrines the vain imaginations of men.

You, no doubt, see *my* opinion in some such unfavourable light; and nothing remains but that, with mutual candour, we exhibit our respective opinions with their proper evi-

* *Isaiah* xlii. 5, xlv. 12, li. 13; *Jer.* x. 12, li. 15.

dence; being all of us persuaded, that the time is coming, when the whole Christian world will embrace our opinion, and that, in due time, all those who now think differently from us, will come to think just as we do, and wonder that they should ever have thought otherwise.

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

Of the Mosaic History of the Fall of Man, and the Conclusion.

Dear Friend,

You enlarge very much, in this *Appendix*, on the opinion I have advanced concerning the *Mosaic* history of the fall of man, and you had represented it (though it seems without knowing it to be mine) as "not worth particular notice;"* and yet, when you come to state your own opinion on the subject, I cannot perceive any ground for such an opprobrious distinction between them. I consider the account that *Moses* has given as *his own*, since he no where says that it is not, and, consequently, the best that he could collect from tradition; and having particularly examined it, I scrupled not to call it *a very lame one.*† I wish, however, that instead of the term *lame*, I had said *imperfect*, which has the same meaning, and might have given less offence. Now, what do *you* say of it? "I am indeed inclined to look upon the Mosaic history of the creation, the fall, the deluge, &c., as a popular history, which should be read with great allowances for the ancient manner of instruction by emblems and hieroglyphics. But I pay more regard to it than Dr. Priestley seems to do."‡ That, no doubt, you do. But, then, I see no *reason* for this superior regard. If it be after all but a *popular history*, and of course not strictly and philosophically true, and if the interpretation be so very difficult, what can we certainly learn from it? Interpret this as you do the passages that speak of the creation of all things by Christ in the *New Testament*, and see what it will then make for *Arianism*.

You say, on this occasion, that I do not allow of "scriptural authority."§ But indeed, my friend, you should have

* *Appendix*, p. 375. † *Supra*, p. 410. ‡ *Appendix*, p. 376. *(P.)*

§ *Ibid.* *(P.)* "It is here an obvious reflection," says Dr. Price, "that the introduction of death by a fall, being a fact capable of being proved only by scriptural authority, and Dr. Priestley not allowing that authority, all disputes with him about it must be nugatory." *Ibid.*

expressed yourself with more caution. No man can pay a higher regard to *proper* scriptural authority than I do; but neither I, nor, I presume, yourself, believe implicitly every thing that is advanced by any writer in the *Old* or *New Testament*. I believe all the writers, without exception, to have been men of the greatest probity, and to have been well informed of every thing of consequence of which they treat; but, at the same time, I believe them to have been men, and, consequently, fallible, and liable to mistake with respect to things to which they had not given much attention, or concerning which they had not the means of exact information; which I take to be the case with respect to the account that *Moses* has given of the creation and the fall of man.

It is on this principle only, that the evidence of revelation can be defended; and if we go upon any other, we load ourselves with insurmountable difficulties, as you would have been still more sensible of if you had written as much as I have done in defence of revealed religion. Do not then say, in such general and unqualified language, that I do not allow of *scriptural authority;* for, if that was the case, I could not be a believer in revelation, which, I am confident, is not your opinion, or an opinion that you would be the means of propagating among others, who, on your authority, would be ready enough to adopt it, and propagate it still farther.

I do not, in this letter, discuss the subject of the fall of man, because I have already advanced what I think sufficient about it, and what I have as yet seen no reason to retract, in the *Theological Repository*, under the signature of PAMPHILUS.* For the same reason neither do I now say any thing in defence of what I there advanced on the natural fallibility and peccability of Christ. But I wish that, instead of seeing my opinions merely exhibited, with every circumstance that can tend to make them appear frightful, and excite the horror of the generality of readers, (which is all that has yet been done by any of my opponents,) they would *produce their strong reasons* against them. They can hardly suppose that such conduct will much affect *me*, and its effect on our readers is only temporary, and may be unfavourable to their purpose in the end. When the most frightful objects have been viewed very often, they cease to appear frightful, and it is no uncommon thing for men to become the most attached to those things to which they at first had the greatest aversion.

* See "Observations relating to the Inspiration of Moses," 1784, in the Fourth Volume of *Theol. Repos.*

As to the doctrine concerning *the person of Christ*, you and I do not differ so much, but that we agree in this, that, at the last day, the inquiry will not be *what we thought of him*, but whether we have *obeyed* his *commands*, and especially that great command, of loving his brethren, and, consequently, of shewing all possible candour to them. *Looking for, and hasting unto, that great day*, I am,

With the affection of a brother,

Dear Friend,

Yours sincerely,

J. PRIESTLEY.

Birmingham, November, 1787.

LETTERS

TO

THE CANDIDATES FOR ORDERS

IN THE

Two Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

LETTER I.

Of Mr. Howes's uncandid Insinuations.

GENTLEMEN,

I AM happy to find that, in consequence of the *Address* which I took the liberty to make to you,* on the subject of *subscription to articles of faith*, and of the present controversy relating to *the person of Christ*, others have likewise addressed themselves to you; and as I do not wish to have fairer umpires in the case, it is with peculiar satisfaction that I once more solicit your attention, and before your tribunal make my defence, in answer to several charges advanced against me by different persons, and especially by Mr. Howes, a learned member of your church. These charges affect my late theological writings in general, my moral character, and the merits of the question in debate.

According to Mr. Howes, my *Histories* "of the Corruptions of Christianity," and "of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ," with the tracts I have written in defence of

* *Supra*, pp. 345—369.

them, are a "huge mass of historical, critical, metaphysical, and philosophical romance,"* and not of an instructive or entertaining kind, as romances might be. Speaking of *Epiphanius*, whose authority, you know, is not the highest among the Christian fathers, he says, "If I found a hundredth part of the mistakes, inaccuracies and romances in the history of Epiphanius, as in Dr. Priestley's own histories, I should readily give him up as an incompetent witness."†

Alluding to my small pretensions to philosophy, he says, "While ostensibly they pretend to act upon philosophic principles, they, in reality, only display a different mode of exerting a blind and impetuous sectarian zeal, and they daily commit the same ravages with their pens, upon the venerable remains of Christian antiquity, which their predecessors, the Mahommedan Unitarians, did with fire and sword, by destroying or mangling all the authentic memorials of the Christian religion in ancient ages; and this, in order to favour the pretended high antiquity of their own *Unitarian* tenets; of the existence of which I can, in fact, find no evidence before the age of Socinus, 1500 years after Christ, but, at least, not in the first two centuries."‡

As to my pretension of having *truth* for the object of my inquiries, Mr. Howes absolutely ridicules it, as you will find in the following exordium to his last work, which is so eloquent that I cannot forbear giving it entire: "The spirit of disputation is like a magic glass, which inverts the whole creation; that is no longer light which we see, nor that real substance which we feel; it teaches us to doubt even our own existence; all the attainments of human science, all the ancient traditions of religion, all the memorials of written history, all the slow and accumulated knowledge of past ages, are made to disappear like a vision, are displaced, distorted, or annihilated, whenever they stand in the way of a new and favourite hypothesis; which has been hastily, perhaps, taken up at first by a false spirit of philosophy, nursed by the subtle spirit of metaphysics, and defended by a wrangling spirit of disputation; all of these sufficient enemies to truth, to be both able and willing to disfigure every feature of it, and this also even in the very moment when the most flattering promises are made of an inviolable attachment to truth, and truth only."§

* *Appendix* to his fourth volume [of *Observations*], p. 7. *(P.)*
† *Ibid.* p. 41. *(P.)* ‡ *Ibid.* p. 23. *(P.)* § *Ibid.* pp. 1, 2. *(P.)*

"Few," he says, "too few, perhaps, may be inclined along with myself, to search for truth with caution and candour, or to embrace it when discovered. Therefore it has been for *the few* alone that my *observations* have been calculated. From those who bring religious or disputatious prejudices along with them I can expect no good; if, while they ostensively profess the cause of truth only, they bring with them a lurking envy at the emoluments of the Established Church; and though called by Elijah to follow him to heaven, if they have their thoughts still fixed upon earth, upon unyoking the oxen, and partaking of *the tithes*, &c., all such, before they approach the hallowed ground of *Truth*, must first put off the old man that is corrupt, according to deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of a right understanding, both to will and to do according to the good motions of *Reason*."* These general sentiments of Mr. Howes are, no doubt, very just, though oddly enough expressed. The question is, whether a beam in his own eye does not prevent his seeing a mote in that of another.

So far am I, according to Mr. Howes, from being a searcher after truth, or loving the *light*, that I rejoice in *darkness*, and wish to be covered with it. Speaking of my representation of the sense of *Epiphanius*, he says, "Such a conduct tends only to introduce confusion. This, however, may be more acceptable than perspicuity, to those whose best evidence for their assertions is, 'Let the darkness cover us.'"† On this occasion I shall only seriously say, that if this account of my views be true, if I do wish that darkness may cover me, the dreadful imprecation will be fulfilled. Though Mr. Howes has taken much pains to represent me as an unbeliever in Christianity, and a secret enemy to it, I am, gentlemen, a serious believer in it; and I hope that both my writings and my conduct will shew, to the unprejudiced, that I truly respect it, and that I shall never violate the spirit and precepts of it so much as Mr. Howes has done in this most unchristian insinuation.

Besides charging me with a total disregard to truth, Mr. Howes more than insinuates that my principal motive in writing is to get possession of the tithes, and other emoluments, of the Established Church. My "most serious inquiries," he says, "are often interlarded with warm ejaculations, which betray a longing wish after *tithes*, &c. Is this consistent in those who profess *only* a regard for

* *Appendix*, pp. 14, 15. (*P.*)

† *Ibid.* p. 122. (*P.*)

truth?" * Quoting some expressions of mine, he says, "Such language may be suitable to the party zeal of a sectary, who makes it his business to fight against establishments unless he can partake of them; as I have shewn from his own words that Dr. Priestley wishes to do. But this is not consistent with my own views or practice."†

Now, gentlemen, if any credit be due to my uniform professions, or to my conduct, I wish, and shall do my endeavour towards effecting, the utter downfal of *all* ecclesiastical establishments, together with their tithes, and every thing else belonging to them. Other writers upbraid me with my violence on this subject. Besides, if I really were what Mr. Howes represents me to be, no believer in Christianity, and destitute of all regard to truth, why might not one establishment suit my purpose as well as another; and why have I applied no part of that *address* and *assiduity* which are generally ascribed to me, to get some preferment in the church? Considering my connexions, few persons will doubt but that, if this had been my object, I might have made a better provision for myself in the church, than I am likely to make out of it.

But how is it that Mr. Howes *proves* that my intention is to get possession of the tithes, &c., *from my own words?* It is as follows: Having expressed my wish, as I frequently have done, for the utter abolishing of all establishments, I mentioned, in my late *Discourse on Free Inquiry*,‡ a more equitable mode of establishing Christianity, which might be adopted in preference to the present; saying, "The most equitable thing—would, no doubt, be to allow Unitarians, or any other description of men, the use of a church,—when their proportion of the tithes, &c., would be sufficient for the maintenance of a minister of their persuasion." Again, in my Sermon preached at Leeds, [1773,] I say, "All who are interested in the support of these anti-christian establishments, which usurp an undue authority over the consciences of men, and whose wealth and power are advanced by them, are, at this very time, in a state of general consternation, &c."§

"By a comparison of the above two passages," Mr. Howes says, "it appears that Dr. Priestley would not consider establishments as *anti-christian*, in case the *power and wealth* of the Unitarians *were advanced by them*, and that such an establishment would not be to *usurp* an *undue* authority over

* *Appendix*, p. 3. *(P.)* † *Ibid.* pp. 12, 13. *(P.)*
‡ In his *Reflections* annexed to the *Discourse* in 1785. See *Appendix*, No. XIII.
§ See Vol. XV. p. 26.

the consciences of men. For, what authority has an orthodox establishment at present over the consciences of men, except the influence arising from what he elsewhere calls the present *exclusive advantages* of establishments?"*

If you, gentlemen, can see the force of this reasoning, you are better skilled in the art of logic than I pretend to be. The fair construction of the passages, without any help from my most unequivocal language elsewhere, is, that *all* ecclesiastical establishments are *anti-christian;* that all of them usurp an undue authority over the consciences of men; and that, instead of wishing to partake of their emoluments, I shall rejoice in their downfal; but that, if they cannot be taken down altogether, it might be better to fix them on a broader basis, so that they might comprehend all the serious professors of Christianity, *Unitarians* as well as others, which is actually the case in *North-America.* Mr. Howes, by his imprudence and intemperate zeal, is, unknown to himself, contributing more to the discredit, and consequently to the downfal, of the church establishment of this country, than I am doing; and if abler and better advised men do not interfere, and better measures be not adopted, the ruin of it will be accomplished much sooner than I had ventured to expect. But I am not so violent a reformer as to wish to imitate the members of the Church of England, when they made the *Act of Uniformity;* in consequence of which two thousand conscientious ministers were deprived of their livings, and many exchanged them for prisons.† I would not deprive any man of his present emolument, but would secure it to him for his life, even that which Dr. Horsley has gained for his important services in writing against myself.

Having descanted upon my *Dedication,*‡ Mr. Howes condescends to bestow some reflections on my *title page,* ridiculing my professing myself "a philosopher," as my "title page," he says, "sets forth in full show; although, indeed, little will be found within correspondent to real philosophy, except hard words."§ Then, in his Note, he recites those additions to my name, which you will find in the titlepage of these *Letters,* in the use of which, as it is the universal practice, I was not aware of there being any thing reprehensible. Not one of the foreign titles‖ was directly, or

* *Appendix,* p. 3, *Note.* *(P.)*

† See Vol. X. p. 411.

‡ To Mrs. Rayner, Vol. VI.

§ *Appendix,* p. 13. *(P.)*

‖ AC. IMP. PETROP. R. PARIS. HOLM. TAURIN. AUREL. MED. PARIS. HARLEM. CANTAB. AMERIC. ET PHILAD. SOCIUS.

indirectly, solicited by myself. For a considerable time I declined the use of them, though contrary to universal custom. I then prefixed them to my philosophical writings only; but being informed that as my other writings went abroad, it would be considered as an affront to the societies which, justly or unjustly, had bestowed them, if they were omitted, I have very lately begun to prefix them to most, but not to all my publications.

Had not Mr. Howes so expressly disclaimed all the *arts of controversy*, and asserted that all his observations were on *books*, and not on *authors*, it might have been thought that some of the remarks I have animadverted upon were of the latter class. For my own part, I profess to be a controversial writer, because I consider fair controversy as a valuable means of discovering and ascertaining truth; but I should think myself disgraced by so much of the *art* of it as you must see to have been adopted by Mr. Howes, even in what is quoted in this introductory letter, which I conclude by subscribing myself,

Gentlemen,
Your very humble servant,
J. PRIESTLEY.

LETTER II.

Of the Doctrine of the Ebionites.

GENTLEMEN,

HAVING given you some idea of the *temper* with which Mr. Howes engages in this *controversy*, (though on his side it must by no means be so denominated,) and of the opinion which he entertains of myself, and of my writings, and also of himself and his writings, I now proceed to the question in debate.

The position which I have endeavoured to establish in my "History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ," is, that the primitive church was properly *Unitarian*, that the great mass of common, unlearned Christians continued to be so till near the Council of *Nice*, and that it was a considerable time before *Unitarianism* was considered as *heretical*. I have also endeavoured to shew at large, that the doctrine of the *Trinity* had its origin in *Platonism*. Both these positions Mr. Howes denies. He even denies the existence of any such doctrine as that of *Unitarianism* (which he quaintly calls *Humanism*) in the two first centuries, and is inclined

to do it even till the time of *Socinus*, or about the year 1500. He denies it both with respect to the *orthodox* and the *heretics*. "Dr. Priestley," he says, "has not, and cannot fix upon any *one* Christian *sect* of the first ages (as I defy him to do) whom he can prove to have disbelieved in the divinity of *the Christ*."* In the title page of his work, he says, "No such Christians ever existed except in Utopia, during the two first centuries, as those whom Dr. Priestley calls ancient Unitarians, that is, who were not believers in the divinity of the Christ, in some mode or other."

In attempting to answer such an extravagant assertion as this, I feel as I should do if I were required to prove that there were any such people as the ancient *Britons*, and that the *Saxons* were intruders in this country. For, to deny them is equally to abandon all faith in history. Mr. Howes, indeed, acknowledges that he is nearly, at least, *singular* in his opinion. It is "a subject," he says, "which has never been hitherto sufficiently attended to by former writers, who have too readily conceded, or rather acquiesced without inquiry, in the confident assertions of the Unitarians, that there *did* exist, in the first two Christian ages, *some* sects who disbelieved the divinity of Christ."† If, therefore, I be in an error, it seems that I am not, like Mr. Howes, singular, or nearly singular, in it. I err in good company, and in that of the orthodox as well as that of the heterodox; and if I have adopted a mistake, I have not the guilt of being the first to start it.

As Mr. Howes cannot deny but that ancient sects of Christians are said by the earliest writers to have called Christ a *mere man*, he says, "All the evidence produced by Dr. Priestley that the Ebionites believed *the Christ* to be merely man, is only by some brief and summary expressions, found in several of the fathers, when they were reasoning upon some other subject; wherein they had no intention of explaining *the whole* of the Ebionitish creed, but introduced incidentally only so much of it as made for their own reasoning in those particular passages."‡ We shall soon see how this *hypothesis* accords with the facts.

I have clearly shewn that, by the confession of all the Christian fathers, who were certainly interested to deny the fact if they could, neither Christ himself, nor any of the apostles before John, taught his pre-existence or divinity, with clearness, and that the chief reason which they assigned

* *Appendix*, p. 8. (*P.*) † *Ibid.* pp. 7, 8. (*P.*) ‡ *Ibid.* p. 86. (*P.*)

for it was, that the prejudices of the Jews, in favour of their *Messiah* being a mere man, were so strong, that their minds would have revolted at it. The Christian world in general, therefore, not having been *instructed* in these doctrines, could not have *believed* them till after the time in which *John* published his gospel, which was generally supposed to be after the death of the other apostles, and the destruction of Jerusalem. But before this time, Christianity, in its *Unitarian* state, was received in almost every part of the Roman empire.

However, great changes in opinion are never brought about suddenly, or without circumstances which prove their reality ; and since we cannot find the least trace of any change having been produced in the Christian world by the writings of *John*, we are necessarily led to infer, that the notion of *John* having taught the doctrines of the pre-existence and the divinity of Christ is an improbable hypothesis, though the best that could be thought of to account for a fact, the reality of which the Christian fathers could not deny, viz. the existence of *Unitarianism* in the great mass of the common people, in their own times and those immediately preceding them.

I have shewn that all the Jewish Christians were called *Ebionites* or *Nazarenes*, and that, according to the unanimous testimony of the ancients, they did not believe in the pre-existence, or the divinity of Christ, though some of them believed in his miraculous conception. It is pretended that besides the *Ebionites* and *Nazarenes*, who are acknowledged to have been unbelievers in the divinity of Christ, there were other *Jewish* Christians who believed that doctrine. But I find no trace of any such persons. Since Mr. Howes, however, denies that even the *Ebionites* or *Nazarenes* disbelieved that doctrine, it may be useful to produce sufficient authority for the common opinion, in reply to him ; and, not to trouble you with unnecessary quotations from original writers, in doing this I shall, in most cases, content myself with referring you to my "History of early Opinions concerning Christ," in which you will find the passages at full ngth.

The first Christian writer who mentions the *Ebionites* by that name is *Irenæus ;* and nothing can be more evident than that, contrary to what Mr. Howes asserts, his *argument* shews that he could not have considered them as believing the divinity of Christ. "God will judge them," he says, "and how can they be saved, if it be not God that works

out their salvation upon earth?" Again he says, "If they persist in their error, not receiving the word of incorruption, they continue in mortal flesh, and are subject to death, not receiving the antidote of life."

I appeal to you, gentlemen, whether this writer could have argued in this manner, or have expressed himself so harshly, if he had considered the *Ebionites* as believing the divinity of Christ. This testimony of *Irenæus* is alone abundantly sufficient to prove that, in his opinion, the *Ebionites* were no believers in the divinity of Christ.

Tertullian, whom you will find Mr. Howes quotes as holding a different opinion, says, that *Ebion* "did not think that Jesus was the Son of God,"* probably meaning that he thought him to be *the Son of Joseph*. But no person, I apprehend, ever disbelieved the miraculous conception, and at the same admitted the divinity of Christ, whether the connexion between these opinions be necessary or not.

The testimony of *Origen* is particularly express. He says, "Those of the Jews who believe Jesus to be the Christ are called *Ebionites*.—Some thinking him to be the son of Joseph and Mary, and others of Mary only and the Divine Spirit, but not believing his divinity."†

This is so contrary to Mr. Howes's assertion, that he thought it necessary to make an observation upon it. "If Origen's words," he says, "be attended to, it seems evident that he never meant to apply the appellation of Ebionites to the Jewish Christians in general, in any other than in a loose sense, just as the members of the Church of England are called Calvinists; meaning only as to their general principles, and not that they are lineally descended from the original Calvinists in Switzerland."‡ But certainly they would not be called *Calvinists* at all, if they were not supposed to hold the distinguishing principles of *Calvinism*. So neither would *Origen* have asserted of the *Ebionites* in general, that they disbelieved the divinity of Christ, and that all the *Jewish* believers were called *Ebionites*, if it had not been his opinion that the Jewish Christians in general, and even those before his own time, held the opinion which he ascribes to them. The probability will always be, that bodies of men receive their doctrines from their ancestors.

Eusebius almost copies *Origen* in his account of the two sorts of *Ebionites*, saying of Christ, "They think him to be

* *Hist.* B. iii. Ch. x. See Vol. VI.
† *Hist.* B. iii. Ch. viii. See Vol. VI.
‡ *Appendix*, p. 83. *(P.)*

merely a man, like other men;" and of those who believe the miraculous conception, he expressly speaks of them as "by no means allowing that Christ was God, the word, and wisdom."*

Epiphanius, whose authority Mr. Howes pretends to be in his favour, says, "Ebion himself held that Christ was a mere man, born as other men are."†

With respect to the *Nazarenes*, whom I have proved to be the very same with the *Ebionites*, *Theodoret* says they "are Jews, who honour Christ as a righteous man,"‡ which he would never have contented himself with saying, if he had supposed that they believed in his divinity.

Epiphanius could never have considered the *Nazarenes* as believers in the divinity of Christ, when he represented them as people who, "on hearing the name of Jesus only, and the miracles performed by the apostles, believe on him."§ It is evident that he considered them as not having heard of his *divinity*, and he speaks of both the *Ebionites* and *Nazarenes*, as requiring to be taught the divinity of Christ by *John*.‖

I have no occasion to pursue this evidence any farther, as all the later writers, without exception, agree with those that I have already quoted. I shall therefore close my present letter, and in my next consider what Mr. Howes has advanced to invalidate this evidence.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

Of the true Meaning of a Passage in Tertullian, and another in Epiphanius, quoted by Mr. Howes.

GENTLEMEN,

THE passages on which Mr. Howes lays the greatest stress are one or two in *Epiphanius*, who, as I have observed, ascribes to some of the *Ebionites* a tenet of the *Gnostics*, viz. that *the Christ* was a super-angelic, created being, who descended into Jesus at his baptism, in which I doubt not he ascribes to them the opinion of the *Corinthians*; and this is not much to be wondered at, as the Corinthians were *Jewish* Christians, as well as the *Ebionites*. The passages may be seen in my *History*.¶ But in them he speaks of

* *Hist.* B. iii. Ch. viii. See Vol. VI.
† *Hist.* B. iii. Ch. x. See Vol. VI.
‡ *Hist.* B. iii. Ch. viii. See Vol. VI.
§ *Hist.* B. iii. Ch. viii. See Vol. VI.
‖ *Hist.* B. iii. Ch. vii. See Vol. VI.
¶ B. iii. Ch. x. See Vol. VI.

this Christ of the *Ebionites* as *created*, and what *divinity* can that be? Mr. Howes, indeed, strangely talks of *degrees of divinity*. But this is to me as incomprehensible as the doctrine of the *Trinity*. "In regard to the degree of divinity," Mr. Howes says, "whether *the Christ* of the Ebionites was a superior, or only subordinate divinity, or no divinity at all, but merely a super-human spirit, this is a question of debate merely between the orthodox and Arians, not between the orthodox and the Humanists."* I think, however, that, if Mr. Howes maintains that the Christ of the *Ebionites* was *God*, and I maintain that he was *not*, the question is *between him and me*, if there be any question between us at all. If this Christ had no divinity at all, surely I am justified in saying that the *Ebionites* did not believe the divinity of Christ, in any sense of the word, and Mr. Howes can have no reason for contesting what I advance.

Mr. Howes imagines that he has found two authorities to support the opinion which he had ascribed to *Epiphanius*. The first is from *Tertullian*, whom I shall quote more at length than Mr. Howes has done, and shew that he has grossly misapprehended his meaning. The passage is in his treatise *De Carne Christi*, in which, having spoken of Christ as being *made lower than the angels*, he says, that "it was as *man*, having the flesh and the soul of man. But as the spirit of God, and the power of the Most High, he could not be lower than the angels, being God, and the Son of God. As much, therefore, as when he carried the man, he was less than the angels, by so much when he carried the angel, he was not less than they. This opinion may agree with that of *Ebion*, who supposed Jesus to be a mere man, only of the seed of David, that is, not the Son of God; clearly, however, in some respects more glorious than the prophets, so that an angel may be said to have been *in him*, as in *Zachariah*, though it is never expressly said so concerning Christ.†

"From this passage," Mr. Howes says, it is plain that

* *Appendix*, p. 107. (*P.*)

† "Minuisti cum modicum quid citra angelos, quomodo videbitur angelum induisse, sic infra angelos diminutus, dum homo sit, qua caro et anima et filius hominis? Qua autem spiritus Dei et virtus altissimi non potest infra angelos haberi. Deus scilicet et Dei filius. Quanto ergo dum hominem gestat minor angelis factus est, tanto non dum angelum gestat. Poterit hæc opinio Hebioni convenire, qui nudum hominem, et tantum ex semine David, id est non et Dei filium constituit Jesum. Plane angelis aliquo gloriosiorem ut ita in illo angelus fuisse dicatur quemadmodum in aliquo Zecharia." *De Carne Christi*, Sect. xiv. (*P.*)

" they (the Gnostics and Ebionites) did not look upon Jesus himself as *the Christ*, or chief agent; but only as the receptacle of a superior agent; and whether this angel be considered as partaking in any degree of a divine nature, or not, yet this makes no difference of any moment. It was still not Jesus, *a mere man*, who was, according to them, *the Christ*, but some superior being, of a divine nature or of an intermediate nature between divinity and humanity."*

Now, certainly, what Mr. Howes calls a difference of no moment, viz. whether this Christ was God, or not, is, as I have observed, the only difference between him and me. But he totally misconstrues the passage, the meaning of which is as follows: *Tertullian* describes the doctrine of the *Ebionites*, by saying, that they believed Jesus to be a mere man; but to give him some advantage over other prophets, they said, that an angel spake *in him* (not *to him*). This is all that, according to *Tertullian*, they acknowledged. But they did not say that this angel was any part of Christ, or united to him, but a very different being. *Tertullian*, indeed, says how far, *in his own opinion*, their doctrine might be reconciled with that of the orthodox, as the divine principle in Jesus might be called an *angel*. But this is entirely his own construction, and a very harsh one, by which he misrepresents the tenets of the orthodox themselves; according to which, the divine principle in Christ was no *angel*, but the uncreated *logos* of the Father, that principle which created all angels. Such is this boasted authority for the concurrence of *Tertullian* with *Epiphanius*, in maintaining that the *Ebionites* were believers in the divinity of Christ; when both of them, in other passages, clearly assert the very contrary.

In this very passage *Tertullian* mentions his own opinion as that of *Christ being God*, and *the Son of God*, that is, as possessed of divinity; and that of the *Ebionites* as of his *not being the Son of God*, that is, as the son of Joseph, and having no divinity. Besides, he represents the opinion of the *Ebionites*, as that of there being only such a difference between Christ and the other prophets, as between *Zachariah* and the other prophets, in consequence of an angel speaking *in him*, and not *to him*. But will Mr. Howes himself say, that it was their opinion, that *Zachariah*, in consequence of an angel speaking *in him*, and not *to him*, was himself an angel, or a God?

* *Appendix*, p. 33. (*P.*)

But Mr. Howes pretends to have the authority of *Theodoret*, as well as that of *Tertullian*, in support of that of *Epiphanius*. But even here his argument is more extraordinary than that from Tertullian. You will naturally imagine, that if Theodoret had really been of opinion that the *Ebionites* were believers in the divinity of Christ, he would have advanced it in that section of his history which is appropriated to the opinions of the Ebionites; I shall therefore recite the whole of that section.

Having, in the first book of his *Heretical Fables*, given an account of the *Gnostics*, who held the doctrine of *two principles*, he proceeds in his second book to give an account of those who, he says, held *a directly opposite doctrine*. "The first of this phalanx," he says, "was Ebion, which, in the Hebrew language, signifies *Poor*. He said, as we do, that there is one uncaused Being, and that he is the maker of the world, but that our Lord Jesus Christ was born of Joseph and Mary, being a man, but excelling in virtue and purity all other men, and living according to the law of Moses. They use no other gospel than that according to the Hebrews, and call the apostle," meaning Paul, "an apostate. Of these was Symmachus, who translated the Scriptures of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek. There is, however, another division of them besides this, having the same denomination, (for they also are called Ebionites,) and in every thing else agree with the former, but say that our Saviour and Lord was born of a virgin. They use no other gospel than that according to Matthew; they keep their sabbath as the Jews do, but they also observe the Lord's-day as we do."*

This is the whole of the section of *Theodoret* concerning the *Ebionites*, and do you perceive in it, Gentlemen, any trace of his supposing that the Ebionites were believers in the divinity of Christ? On the contrary, is it not evident that he represents them as believing his mere humanity? I really think that if Mr. Howes himself had seen this ar-

* Ταυτησι δε της φαλαγγος ηρξεν Εβιων, τον πτωχον δε ουτως Εβραιοι προσαγορευουσιν. Ουτος ενα μεν αγεννητον εφη, παραπλησιως ημιν, και αυτον εδειξεν ειναι τω κοσμω δημιουργον, τον δε Κυριον Ιησουν Χριστον εξ Ιωσηφ και της Μαριας εφησε γεγεννησθαι, ανθρωπον μεν οντα, αρετη δε και καθαροτητι των αλλων διαφεροντα, κατα δε τον Μωσαικον πολιτευοντα νομον. Μονον δε το κατα Εβραιους ευαγγελιον δεχονται, τον δε αποστολον αποστατην καλουσι. Εκ τουτων ην Συμμαχος, ος την παλαιαν γραφην εκ της Εβραιων μεταθεικως εις την Ελλαδα φωνην. Αλλη δε παρα ταυτην συμμορια την αυτην επωνυμιαν εχουσα, Εβιωναιοι γαρ και ουτοι προσαγορευονται, τα αλλα δε απαντα συνομολογει τοις προτεροις, τον δε Σωτηρα και Κυριον εκ παρθενου γεγεννησθαι φησιν. Ευαγγελιω δε τω κατα Ματθαιον κεχρηνται μονω, και το μεν σαββατον κατα τον Ιουδαιων τιμωσι νομον, την δε κυριακην καθιερωσι, παραπλησιως ημιν. *(P.)*

ticle,* he would never have claimed the authority of *Theodoret*. How, then, does he pretend to it? Not directly, but very indirectly indeed.

"Epiphanius," he says, "in his brief *summary* concerning the Elcesaites,—says expressly that *they* held nearly the same opinions in *all things* with the Ebionites.—Now that the Elcesaites believed in the descent of a *divine Christ*, and his union with the humanity of Jesus, is proved by all writers, but particularly by Theodoret, who says, 'They believe there is one unbegotten Being, and him they call the maker of all things; yet they do not say that *Christ* was *one*, but that there was one *above*, and another *below*, and that he had formerly dwelt in many persons, but that at last he *descended*. *Jesus* also, as Elcsai says sometimes, was *ex Deo;* but that at other times he calls him a spirit, and sometimes that a virgin was his mother; in other writings, however, not even this. Again he says, that he passes into other bodies, and at every time he appeared differently."†

Thus because such a writer as *Epiphanius* says, that the *Ebionites* agreed *nearly in all things* with the *Elcesaites*, and, according to Theodoret, *these* believed the descent of a *created spirit*, called Christ, into Jesus, the Ebionites believed the *divinity* of Christ. Many things are wanting to make this a good syllogism. I shall not even take the trouble to point them out. That the Christ of the *Elcesaites* was not *God*, is evident from his supposed transmigrations.

Mr. Howes supposes, that "both Epiphanius and Tertullian" borrowed their account of the Ebionites from Justin Martyr's lost *Treatise against Heretics*.‡ But there is not the least probability in the conjecture. It is impossible to read the two remarkable passages in which Justin gives an account of *heresies*,§ without being satisfied that, in his idea, the *Gnostics* were the only heretics. Of the *Unitarians*, he speaks with respect, and even apologizes to them for differing from them.

A circumstance of extreme improbability in Mr. Howes's scheme, sufficient of itself to explode it, is, that all the difference between the *Ebionites* and the orthodox was the *time* in which the union between the divine and human nature in Christ took place: the orthodox saying it was at the con-

* Which, it appears from p. 46, he had not. (*P.*) Mr. Howes says, "I am prevented from quoting the Greek, by not having such an edition at hand." He relied on "Lardner and the Latin translator." *Ibid.*

† *Appendix*, pp. 44—46. (*P.*)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 30. (*P.*)

§ See Vol. VI. pp. 131, 132.

ception of Jesus, and the *Ebionites*, at his baptism; for he says nothing of any difference between them with respect to his strange notion of the *kind* or *degree of divinity*. But can any person seriously believe that so small a difference as this could have been the occasion of so much animosity as the orthodox shewed towards the *Ebionites?* If the only difference had been the circumstance of *time*, this would have been principally insisted upon in their censures; as, if the point of difference had been the *degree of divinity*, the *degree* would have been insisted upon, and not *divinity*, or *no divinity*, which is always the case.

Mr. Howes thought it of some consequence to fix the *origin* of the *Ebionites*, whom I have supposed to be coeval with the apostles. On the contrary, Mr. Howes says, "We find no *certain* proof of the existence of *any* Ebionites before 98.—It is the time *when* the fathers *suppose* St. John to have writ his gospel, which determines the date of the rise both of Ebionites and Nazarenes, as sectaries."*

To prove that the *Ebionites* were subsequent to "Aquila and Theodotion," Mr. Howes quotes *Irenæus*, who, after citing their interpretation of a Hebrew word, "adds, 'Quos *secuti* Ebionitæ, ex Josepho eum generatum dicunt.'"†

This argument is curious, as it is evident that all that *Irenæus* meant was, that the *Ebionites* agreed with *Aquila* and *Theodotion*, (who were, in fact, of their own body, and, therefore, could not be prior to them,) in the interpretation of the word in question. According to Jerome, *Theodotion* was "an Ebionite," and certainly not the first of the sect; so also was *Symmachus*, who was contemporary with *Justin Martyr*.‡ Besides, Eusebius says, that the denomination of *Ebionites* was given by "the first heralds of our Saviour,"§ which certainly carries them to the age of the apostles.

The late date of *John's* gospel, which Mr. Howes says the Christian fathers supposed, is greatly favourable to my purpose; for they all represent him as the first who taught with clearness and effect the doctrines of the pre-existence and divinity of Christ; for the *later* this was done, the longer time there had been for the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ to establish itself.

What Mr. Howes has undertaken in his last publication, is, to prove that all the *ancient heretics* were believers in the

* *Appendix*, p. 58. (*P.*)
† *Ibid.* p. 56. (*P.*)
‡ *Hist.* B. iii. Ch. xii. See Vol. VI.
§ *Hist.* B. iii. Ch. viii. See Vol. VI.

divinity of Christ, reserving for a future opportunity (which I hope will come soon) to prove that all the orthodox (or those who, being in communion with the Catholic church, were *not deemed heretics)* believed it.* But he has confined himself to the denominations of *Ebionites* and *Nazarenes*, who were *Jews*, omitting *the Gentile Unitarians*, of whom *Justin Martyr* speaks with great respect, though professing to take the liberty of thinking differently from them, as I have shewn at large in my History,† &c. Mr. Howes is equally silent with respect to the *Alogi* of *Epiphanius*, and who, he says,‡ were opposed by the apostle John ; so that, according to him, they must have existed in the age of the apostles.

Thus, Gentlemen, I willingly make you the judges between Mr. Howes and me. *Epiphanius* himself, you see, only supposed the *Ebionites* to have asserted with the *Cerinthians*, (in which it is almost certain that he was mistaken,) that the Christ entered into Jesus at his baptism, but he acknowledges that they did not suppose that this descending Christ was *God ;* and his farther evidence from *Tertullian* and *Theodoret*, in support of what would avail him nothing, if he could prove it, is most palpably weak and insufficient.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

Of Mr. Howes's Charge of a wilful Anachronism, in the Age of Plotinus.

GENTLEMEN,

YOU have seen several specimens of Mr. Howes's bold charges, and his very lame support of them. I shall now present you with another even bolder than the preceding, and still worse supported.

With an air of insolent triumph, he subjoins to the title-page of his work, (and he inserts the same in all his public advertisements of it,)—" together with another curious specimen of romance, in his late ' History of the Early Opinions concerning Christ,' in regard to Plotinus being made, by him, to instruct the first Christian fathers in the Platonic catechism, a whole century before Plotinus was born."

This, Gentlemen, it gives me real concern to say, is

* *Appendix*, p. 126. (*P.*)
† B. iii. Ch. xiv.
‡ *Hær.* li. Sect. xii. *Opera*, I. p. 423. (*P.*)

nothing less than *an absolute falsehood*, both in words and sense; it is even destitute of all colour of truth. From reading what Mr. Howes so confidently asserts, you would unavoidably conclude, that I had represented the Christian fathers as quoting *Plotinus*, or borrowing something that came from *him*, which, however, is by no means true. Mr. Howes quotes no passage in my *History*, in proof of his assertion; but you may look it through, and I am confident you will find no such thing, nor any thing from which it can be inferred. As what Mr. Howes advances on this subject is not very long, I shall copy the whole of it.

"Dr. Priestley suggests in his *History of Christian Opinions*, Vol. I., in proof of the Christian philosophers, about the time of Justin, having first expelled Humanism, and introduced the doctrine of Christ's divinity, that they had borrowed their notions of the Trinity from the *later Platonists*, as they are commonly called. Now Plotinus was the oldest of these later Platonists, and he was not born until after the year 200; how, then, could Justin, about the year 140, borrow any thing from the later Platonists? Yet, not satisfied with suggesting this monstrous anachronism, both by his *arrangement* and *expressions* in the body of his *new History*, in such a manner as must necessarily lead his readers into an error concerning the *possibility* of the fact, Dr. Priestley has taken care, moreover, to confirm them in this error, in his *Biographical Chart*, prefixed to his first volume; for, behold, there Plotinus is placed as being born soon after the year 100, and a little *before* Justin Martyr, so as to make him old enough to teach the Platonic catechism to Justin; whereas, in reality, Justin was long dead before the *birth* of Plotinus, who did not flourish until about the year 240; therefore, a whole century later than where Dr. Priestley has placed him in his *Chart*. What dependence, then, can be placed on the expositions of scripture, or the assertions in history, by those who can thus make dead Christians to be instructed by profane philosophers, who were not born until 20 or 30 years after the death of their pretended scholars?"*

Now, so far have I been from saying that *Justin Martyr*, or any of the Christian fathers, quoted *Plotinus*, that I no where say that they adopted the principles of any of the *later Platonists*, but of *Platonism in general*. Examine all my quotations, and you will find that they refer to *Plato*

* *Appendix*, pp. 126—128.

only. If any thing that I have said should imply more, it is a casual oversight.

If I *had* said that the Christian fathers adopted any principles of the *later Platonists*, as different from those of *Plato* himself, there would have been no anachronism in it. I should only have represented them as adopting the principles of the school, which principles I shew to have existed by means of the writings of the later Platonists. With the same colour of truth Mr. Howes might have said that I had made *Justin Martyr* the scholar of *Jamblicus*, *Julian*, or even *Proclus*, who lived in the year 600. For I quote them as much as I do *Plotinus*, and for the same purpose, viz. to ascertain what were the doctrines of their school.

If Mr. Howes meant to assert that *Plotinus* was the founder of the sect of later *Platonists*, which is the only sense in which his calling him the *oldest* can be to his purpose, it is notoriously false. He himself quotes *Petavius*, as saying that "Plotinus was the scholar of Ammonius," and in the same place he quotes without censure my saying that "those who are usually called the *later Platonists* were those philosophers, chiefly of Alexandria, who a little *before* and *after* the commencement of the Christian æra, adopted the general principles of Plato." If, then, the school, and its tenets, existed before the *Christian æra*, what anachronism is there in making the Christian fathers borrow from it? Does not *Philo* appear to have imbibed the principles of this school as much as any of the Christian fathers? Did they not, therefore, exist long before *Plotinus*?

Mr. Howes says I have suggested this monstrous anachronism, "both by my arrangement and my expressions, in the body of my history," which is absolutely false. For in the book itself, as you will see, I give the age of *Plotinus* right, saying, that he died in 270, aged 66; though, by some accident, perhaps the mistake of the engraver, the name is placed in the *Chart*, just a century wrong, which, if I were to explain to you the mechanical method of drawing such charts, I could satisfy you was the easiest of all mistakes. In my large *Chart of Biography*, which I could not mean to depart from, but really thought I had copied, *Plotinus* is placed where he should be.*

Thus, Gentlemen, can a man, who professes to disclaim

* See *supra*, p. 426, *Note* *.

all the *arts of controversy*, write. I could not have imagined that any person could have suspected another of *attempting* such an imposition as Mr. Howes charges me with putting on the public, an imposition, that a schoolboy might have detected and exposed, as well as Mr. Howes. I ought, however, to except Dr. Horsley, who charged me with wilfully falsifying the common English translation of the *New Testament*. I should blush, and retire for ever from the sight or converse of scholars, if I had been convicted of such a piece of miserable chicanery as this of Mr. Howes. These are the boasted champions of modern orthodoxy. Had any *Unitarian* endeavoured to take such an advantage of his opponent in controversy, I should have thought it necessary to disclaim all connexion with him. Let us see how Dr. Horne and others, advocates for the doctrine of the *Trinity*, will act on this occasion. How different from this conduct of Mr. Howes is that of Dr. Geddes! If I should be obliged to surrender at discretion, it would be a pleasure to give my sword to so generous an adversary.

Two inconsiderable mistakes Mr. Howes has observed in my *History*, which I shall correct, and which I should have acknowledged with gratitude, if there had been any appearance of generosity or candour in the intimation. I had rendered βδελυγον, *abominable rites;* whereas Mr. Howes, with great probability, conjectures, that it means the *abomination* with which, according to *Epiphanius*, the *Ebionites* held other people.* He also justly observes, that I had no foundation for saying that the word *Ebion* (and not *Ebionite)* was not mentioned by *Tertullian*.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

Several gross Mistakes of Mr. Howes, with respect to the Tenets of ancient Sects.

GENTLEMEN,

MR. HOWES, undertaking to correct my mistakes, should have been careful to make none of his own: and yet I will venture to say that, excepting, and hardly excepting, Dr. Horsley, there is no example of any person in modern times having made such gross blunders as he has done, in

* *Appendix*, p. 73. (*P.*)

his account of the tenets of ancient sects; confounding the opinions of the *Gnostics* with those of the *Ebionites*, both of them with those of the *Arians*, and indeed all three with the *orthodox*, as all holding the divinity of Christ; though no schemes can be more clearly marked as distinct, by all who have treated of them. He might as well have confounded them all with *Judaism* or *Paganism* itself.

Only read the following paragraphs, and then judge whether Mr. Howes or myself have travelled most in *Utopia*, or have dealt most in *romance*. After asserting that, according to Epiphanius, the opinion of the *Gnostics* and *Ebionites* was, that "it was not Jesus, *a mere man*, who was *the Christ*, but some superior being, of a divine nature, or of an intermediate nature between divinity and humanity," he adds, "this was also the chief principle of the Arians, only with some variations in *other* respects. How, then, can Dr. Priestley assert that the chief principle of Arianism was not ancient among the Christian sectaries? Arianism, in fact, was but a varied copy of Gnosticism and Ebionitism. It borrowed their chief principle of *a created Christ*, and only accommodated it a little more to the mode of orthodoxy, by supposing their created Christ, of an intermediate nature, to have been united to humanity by a miraculous conception in Mary, instead of a miraculous union to the humanity of Jesus at baptism. Paulus of Samosata varied this doctrine a little more still, and only a little, by supposing that the divine Christ, instead of being created before the creation, was first created by God, out of his unmanifested *Logos*, at the miraculous conception of Mary. So that Paulus was, in fact, as much a believer in the divinity of Christ as the Ebionites and Arians."*

Let Mr. Howes produce any *Arian*, ancient or modern, who will say that he believes in the *divinity of Christ;* and that this *divine Christ* should have been *created*, is a most palpable contradiction. He says, that the *Arians* supposed their *created Christ, of an intermediate nature*, to have been united to *humanity*. Now, in *humanity* was always supposed to be included all that is *essential to man*, the *soul*, as well as the *body*. But no *Arian* ever held that Christ had a human soul. According to them, the *created logos* occupied the place of one.

In my detail of the principles of the *Gnostics* and those

* *Appendix*, p. 33. (*P.*)

of the *Arians*, you will find that, in one respect, they *did* resemble each other, though the latter were far from copying the former. Those *Gnostics* who held that Jesus had a real human body, believed that he had also a human soul. For, according to them, he was, in all respects, like another man till his baptism; but they said that a superangelic spirit, or *the Christ*, then came into him. The orthodox fathers also asserted two intelligent principles in Christ, the human soul, and the uncreated *logos;* whereas the *Arians*, retaining the doctrine of the *Logos*, (not *the Christ* of the *Gnostics,)* supposed it to have been *created*, not *uncreated.* But then they found it unnecessary to retain the human soul; it being justly deemed absurd that two created intelligent principles should be in one person.

What Mr. Howes here asserts of *Paul of Samosata* is, I will venture to assert, a strange and absurd fabrication of his own, for which, to adopt his own language, I *defy* him to produce any authority, ancient or modern. That *Paul* was as much a believer in the divinity of Christ as the *Ebionites* or *Gnostics*, is certain, because none of them believed in it; but that "the divine Christ—was first created by God out of his unmanifested logos," is a notion that must have been utterly incomprehensible to this *Paul*, or to any man who endeavours to affix ideas to words.

Similar to this extravagance are the following curious assertions of Mr. Howes: "They" (the Ebionites) "were the mere spawn of the Cerinthians, and the very dregs of absurdity and superstition; just as the modern Humanists are the humble imitators of the pretendedly philosophic Gnostics in general."*

What there is in common between the modern *Unitarians* and the *Gnostics*, Mr. Howes should have specified. According to him, the *Gnostics* were believers in the divinity of Christ, whereas we disclaim that notion, in every sense of the word. It is the very cause of the great indignation against us that we do so. According to all antiquity, the *Gnostics* believed the pre-existence of Christ, and that he was of a nature superior to that of man, which, it is known, we disclaim. Mr. Howes himself will hardly say that we believe, with the *Gnostics*, that the world was not made by the Supreme Being, but by a subordinate evil agent, or that this evil agent gave the law of *Moses*. In what, then, do we resemble them?

* *Appendix*, p. 109. (*P.*)

When I read these strange assertions of Mr. Howes, and his opinion, that "the popular theology of the Jews" is to be found in *Philo*,* I fancy myself to be in a new world of antiquity, and that some *Père Hardouin*† has recomposed all the Christian fathers, and all the other books relating to ecclesiastical history that I have ever read or heard quoted before. When you read this, judge, gentlemen, whether "a new earth and a new heaven—for Christian men," (of which Mr. Howes speaks, as "created" by me,)‡ be found in my writings or in his.

Among Mr. Howes's other mistakes concerning the *Arians*, he does not, however, maintain with Dr. Horsley, that there is no difference between *their* doctrine, and the orthodox doctrine of the *personification of the Logos*. He also admits the veracity of *Origen;* and so far from contending that there was a church of orthodox Jewish Christians at Jerusalem *after* the time of Adrian, he finds that there was but a very small one *before* that time.§

By Mr. Howes's quoting "a Jew of the sect of the Caraites, because he cannot be supposed to be infected with the Cabbalistic notions of the more modern rabbinical Jews; but rather to tell us the true opinion of the original Jews,"‖ I am willing to hope that he does not *now* lay the stress that he did before on the writings of the *Cabbalists*, in proving that the Jews were always *Trinitarians*, and expected the second person of the *Trinity* in their *Messiah;* a notion which none of the Christian fathers could find among them; though they would, no doubt, have been as glad to catch at it as Dr. Allix, Mr. Howes, or Mr. Park-

* *Appendix*, p. 117. (*P.*)

† A very learned French Jesuit, who died at Paris in 1729, aged 83. "In 1693, he printed at Paris, in two vols. 4to. *Chronologiæ ex Nummis antiquis restitutæ Prolusio, de Nummis Herodiadum.*" In this work "he undertakes to prove from medals, that the greater part of those authors which have passed upon the moderns for ancient, were forged by some monks of the thirteenth century, who gave to them the several names of Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, &c., Tertullian, Origen, Basil, Augustin, &c. He only excepts out of this monkish manufacture the works of Cicero, Pliny's *Natural History*, Virgil's *Georgics*, and Horace's *Satires and Epistles*. These he supposes the only genuine monuments of antiquity remaining, except some few inscriptions and *fasti:* and with the assistance of these, he thinks, that these monks drew up and fashioned all the other ancient writings, as Terence's *Plays*, Livy's and Tacitus's *Histories*, Virgil's *Eneid*, Horace's *Odes*, &c. Nay, he pushed this chimera so far, that he fancied he could see plainly enough that Æneas in Virgil was designed for Jesus Christ, and Horace's mistress Lalage for the Christian religion.—This work was suppressed by public authority at Paris." *Gen. Biog. Dict.* 1784, VI. p. 445. The *Æneid*, according to P. *Hardouin*, was composed by a Benedictine of the thirteenth century, to describe, allegorically, St. Peter's journey to Rome—*décrire allégoriquement le voyage de St. Pierre à Rome*. See *Nouv. Dict. Hist.* III. pp. 241—243.

‡ *Appendix*, p. 2. (*P.*) § *Ibid.* p. 90. (*P.*) ‖ *Ibid.* p. 35. (*P.*)

hurst.* Mr. Howes, however, expresses his approbation of Mr. Parkhurst's late publication against me,† in which he endeavours to prove the doctrine of the Trinity from the form of the word *elohim*.‡ I can have no objection to Mr. Howes,§ Dr. Horsley, and Mr. Parkhurst continuing to admire one another, but they would do better for their cause, if they could agree a little more than they do, in the principles on which they defend it.

Mr. Madan also joins Mr. Parkhurst in urging the argument from *elohim*. But Dr. Croft, in his *Bampton Lectures*,‖ disapproves of it. "Perhaps too much stress," he says, "is laid upon the expression, *Let us make man in our image*. The plural is frequently applied to one only, and the language of consultation is evidently used in condescension to human infirmity. It may be dangerous," he adds, "to rest an article of faith upon that which may be a mere idiom."¶

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

Of several Publications of less Note, and among them Mr. Madan's.

GENTLEMEN,

I CANNOT pretend to notice every thing that has been addressed to me on the subject of this controversy. The tracts to which I have not particularly replied are of two characters, some being written in the way of *humour*, and the rest, of *invective*, of the most virulent kind; whereas the only thing that is really wanting is serious *argument*. Excepting one of the publications of Mr. Whitaker,** who

* See *supra*, pp. 417, *Note* *, 419, 427. † See *ibid.* pp. 416, 417.

‡ *Appendix*, p. 112. (*P.*)

§ For "an addition to the Letters relating to Mr. Howes," see *Appendix*, No. XV.

‖ "Eight Sermons, preached before the University of Oxford in the year 1786, at the Lecture founded by the late John Bampton, M. A." 1788. See *New Ann. Reg.* IX. p. [213].

¶ *Lect.* p. 64. (*P.*)

** I would recommend to Mr. Whitaker the perusal of Mr. Wiche's "Observations on the Debate now in agitation concerning the Divine Unity," in a letter to himself, as containing many things deserving of his consideration, as well as that of all who give any attention to this controversy, and written with a truly Christian spirit. (*P.*)

Of Mr. Wiche, see *supra*, p. 152, *Note* ‡. In 1786 were published "Four Dialogues on the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, &c. by E. W. Whitaker, Rector of St. Mildred's and All-Saints, Canterbury." See *New Ann. Reg.* VII. pp. [229,] [230.]

will find himself sufficiently answered in my "Letters to Dr. Geddes," every thing I have seen of the argumentative kind relates to the doctrine of the *Scriptures;* with respect to which, so much has been advanced by myself and others, that I think it unnecessary to say any thing farther. In this we are, as it were, come to issue, and the public must determine between us. It is to the argument from *antiquity* that I particularly wish to draw the attention of the learned; and in this field very few have as yet made their appearance, and those few, as you must have perceived, have been very little acquainted with the ground they have ventured to tread.

Some of my opponents, evidently distrusting the power of *argument*, have more than hinted at the propriety of calling in the aid of the *civil magistrate;* but none of them have done this so loudly, and so distinctly, as Mr. Madan, who says, that "the Christian religion is a part of the common law of this country, that our kings are its nursing fathers, and our queens its nursing mothers; that it has always been held that *blasphemy* and *profaneness*, written, printed, or advisedly spoken, are indictable, and punishable; and that punishments inflicted for these offences were never more deemed *persecution* than the convicting a person of profane cursing and swearing;" and my works, he says, "might furnish matter for a trial at the next Stafford assizes;" but hints that it might not be proper to permit the trial to be printed, like that of Mr. Elwall.*

I need not shew you, Gentlemen, that Mr. Madan's maxims will justify all the persecutions that have been in the world, from the age of the apostles to the present time, as they were all in pursuance of the laws of the countries in which they were carried on. It is happy for the cause of free inquiry and truth, that the spirit of the present times only permits such monsters as these to shew their teeth and claws, and what they would do if they had the power. Mr. Madan should propose himself as a candidate for the next vacancy in the office of Inquisition in *Spain* or *Portugal*, if his maxims would do even for those countries at present. Unhappily, he was born too late.

Much stress has been laid by several of my opponents on my frank acknowledgment to Dr. Price, that "I did not know when my creed would be fixed."† This, however, I must continue to say, while I continue my inquiries,

* *Letters to Dr. Priestley*, 1787, p. 145. (*P.*)

† See *supra*, p. 414.

and profess, as every fair inquirer will do, to be determined by any new and stronger evidence that shall be presented to me. And this is certainly no disadvantage to my readers, who, I hope, will not be moved by my *authority*, but only by the *evidence* that I lay before them; and *that* will always be the same, and have the same weight, though my idea of its weight should change ever so often.

Did not *Luther* go on changing his opinions till a very late period of his life, and was he ever reproached with it, except by the Catholic party, whose spirit, I am sorry to say, is too apparent in the defenders of the church establishment of this country? But similar situations will dictate similar modes of thinking and reasoning. Was it not highly honourable in Dr. Whitby, at a late period of a life devoted to study, and after having repeatedly defended the doctrine of the *Trinity*, to declare himself an *Arian*, and to defend that opinion in his *Last Thoughts?** Equally honourable was the change of opinion of the late excellent Bishop of Carlisle, who from being an *Arian* became a *Socinian*, and in the last edition of his *Considerations*, &c., carefully expunged every passage that had expressed his belief of the pre-existence of Christ.† Let me class with such men as these, and not

* In the Preface to which he says, "This my *retractation*, or change of my opinion, after all my former endeavours to assert and establish a contrary doctrine, deserves the more to be considered, because it proceeds (and, indeed, can proceed) from me for no other reason, but purely from the strong and irresistible convictions which are now upon me, that I *was mistaken*.

"Nothing, I say, but the love of truth can be supposed to extort such a *retractation* from me, who having already lived so long beyond the common period of life, can have nothing else to do but to prepare for my great change; and in order thereunto to make my peace with God, and my own conscience, before I die. To this purpose I solemnly appeal to the Searcher of hearts, and call God to witness, whether I have *hastily* or *rashly* departed from the common opinion; or rather, whether I have not *deliberately* and *calmly* weighed the arguments on both sides, drawn from scripture and antiquity?

"And even yet, if any will be so kind, as *in the spirit of meekness* to answer the arguments I have produced to justify my change, if it please God to give me the same degree of health and soundness of mind, which, by his blessing and goodness, I now enjoy, I promise sincerely to consider them, and to act suitably to the strength of the argument; but if any such answer is attempted with angry invectives and haughty sophistry, aiming to be wise above what is written, I must say, μενωμεν ὡσπερ εσμεν, i. e. *I must remain in my present sentiments;* having, in this short Treatise, seriously considered all that I had said in my *Commentary* to the contrary, and fully answered the most considerable places I had then produced for confirmation of the doctrine I there *too hastily* endeavoured to establish.

"I conclude with those words of St. Austin, *Errare possum, hæreticus esse nolo;* that is, *I may err, but I will not be an heretick.* As yet I must be in St. Paul's sense, (*Titus* iii. 10, 11,) if I would act against the dictates and strong convictions of my conscience." Matthews's *Recorder*, 1803, II. pp. 105—107. See *Brit. Biog.* VII. p. 86.

† In the "Survey of the *Search after Souls*," published in 1758, Dr. Fleming thus quotes the "Reflections on the Life and Character of Christ," from an early edition of the *Considerations*, which were first published, without the *Reflections*,

with those who are determined to hold their present opinions, whatever they be, at all events, and who shut their ears to all conviction; for such must be all those who censure my conduct.

Another of my opponents (but I am not now able to say which) ridiculing the Bishop of Landaff's truly useful publication for the use of young clergymen,* amuses himself with the idea of the perplexity of a Welsh curate, who should not be able to tell which scheme of faith, contained in that work, he should adopt; not considering, or perhaps not knowing, that the chief use of *reading* is to make men *think*, and form systems for themselves; and that every person officiating as a Christian minister, whether residing in Wales or elsewhere, may reasonably be supposed to do this. Perhaps this acute reasoner would find a difference between treatises bound up together, uniformly printed, and published by the same person, and such as are published separately. Or perhaps, having his head full of the idea of

in 1745: "Doctor Law (pp. 290—292) likewise talks of 'a Being of *infinite* glory and perfection, the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature, and the Lord of heaven and earth, condescending to degrade himself from all this power and dignity; divest himself of every glorious attribute, and appear not only in the *form*, but *real nature* of man, and in its most imperfect and forlorn estate; under all the wants and weaknesses, and pains of infancy; that he should be content to recover his former qualities again, one by one, in slow degrees, and mixed with all the infirmities of childhood.'" *Survey*, pp. 191, 192.

When the Bishop published his sixth edition in 1774, he had so far altered his views as to substitute, (pp. 275, 276,) for the former part of the first sentence, the following: "That a Being of *inconceivable* perfections should divest himself of every glorious attribute," &c. In the seventh *(Carlisle)* edition, the author thus gives the passage, now abandoning all his former notions of Christ's pre-existence:

"That the great Messenger and Mediator of a new covenant, fixed in the Divine decrees from the beginning, foretold by the ancient prophets, and announced by an host of angels, that he should at length appear, not only in the form, but real nature of man, and in its most imperfect and forlorn state, under all the wants, and weaknesses, and pains of infancy; that he should receive the Divine communications in slow degrees, *(Luke* xi. 52,) and mixed with all the infirmities of childhood!" *Considerations*, 1784, p. 289.

Thus was the "Theory, purged of some ancient prejudices relative to pre-existence," as Bishop Law expresses himself in a Letter to Mr. Lindsey, from "Cambridge, September 23, 1783." See Mr. Belsham's *Memoirs*, p. 163.

Dr. Fleming also objected *(Survey*, p. 185) to Dr. Law's representation of "eternal life—as the *purchase* of our Saviour and Redeemer Christ;" and there is, in the sixth edition, pp. 281—286, a long note, in which the bishop appears to maintain the doctrine of *atonement* in the manner of Dr. Taylor and Mr. Tomkins. This note is entirely omitted, on the same passage, p. 295, of the *Carlisle* edition.

Thus laudably cautious was this *Unitarian* writer not to misrepresent religion to his readers. How deeply is it to be regretted, that, in his *prelatical* character, Dr. Law should have continued through life to misrepresent himself before the public, while virtually professing the doctrine, performing the offices, and enjoying the lucrative dignities of a *Trinitarian* church; deaf to the warning voice—*Come out of her, and be ye separate!* See Vol. III. p. 378; *Mon. Repos.* I. p. 178.

* Theological Tracts, six vols. 8vo. 1785. See *supra*, p. 350.

subscription, he might think that nothing is to be *read* that is not also to be *subscribed.*

Several of my opponents, as well as Mr. Howes, have amused themselves and their readers with the letters, &c., I have lately subjoined to my name, in the title pages of some of my publications,* under the idea, as I must suppose, of their reflecting some ridicule upon me, though they do not seem to have been able to make out their meaning. If this circumstance be any disgrace to me, it is my misfortune, and should entitle me to their compassion, as it was not of my seeking. None of them, however, reflect any dishonour on either of our English universities.

This business reminds me of what is told of Dr. South, who being reflected upon by Dean Sherlock,† on account of his *wit*, (of which the dean might think that he made an improper use,) replied, that "it might have pleased God to have made *him* a wit." Let my adversaries, therefore, spare me on this subject, since it might have happened that their names should have had the same appendages with mine.

Some, as any thing is easier than close argumentation, have even amused themselves with the number of my publications, and others with my *mottos;* and perhaps they may find some instruction as well as amusement in them.

I have been sometimes amused with what has been said of *myself*, and my *opinions*, of which some, who have addressed letters to me, seem to have been as ignorant as they have been of my titles. I need not observe that I have been most unmercifully stripped by them of every commendable quality of mind, natural or acquired, and of every kind of literature that is requisite to my writing on the subjects which I have presumed to discuss; but it is my *pride (rank pride, and haughtiness of soul*, as the poet calls it) on which they have enlarged the most. No man, I suppose, can presume to think for himself, and much less to teach others, but he must be *proud.*

"It is, unquestionably, pride," says one of them to you, "which has brought on your presumptuous teacher that πωρωσις, that blindness and hardness of heart, the one as consequential of the other." To avoid this pride you can do no less than implicitly receive what your teachers think

* See *supra*, p. 472, *Note* ||.

† "During their bitter controversy on the *Trinity*, 1693—1695. See *Memoirs of South*, prefixed to his *Posthumous Discourses*, 1717, pp. 118—134; Dr. Toulmin's *Historical View*, 1814, pp. 177—187.

proper to prescribe to you; and, perhaps, that humility *may have its perfect work*, it may be advisable to sign the following form prescribed by a Protestant synod in France [1612]: "I receive and approve, all that is contained in the confession of faith of the Reformed Churches of this nation, and promise to persevere therein to my life's end; and never to believe or teach any thing not conformable to it."* Indeed, I do not see that any thing short of this will satisfy your tutors that your *creed is absolutely fixed;* and without this you will be in the same reproachful situation with myself.

This gentleman advises the Dean of Canterbury to have nothing more to say to me, and he even wishes that I may never see what he addresses to you, "because his letter was written without any view to convert me, but to preserve you." But if this had been his object, he should have circulated his *Address* in the universities only, and not have advertised it for public sale.

As to my *religion*, it is, according to this candid writer, "without a soul, without a Bible, (that is worth your attention,) without a church, and without a Saviour."† What this sentence wants in truth and sense, it makes up in sound.

A father, more careful of the orthodoxy than of the honesty of his son Charles, informs him, (p. 21,) that "all good and wise men in every age have thought it their duty to comply with the established religion of their country; and that he only subscribes the Thirty-nine Articles as a layman, and as terms of peace and communion."‡

* See the Preface to Jortin's "Remarks on Ecclesiastical History," 1751, p. xvii. (*P.*) Dr. Price, speaking of *Calvinism*, says, "In *Scotland*, if I am not mistaken, the clergy are required not only to declare their belief of this system, but that they will *constantly adhere to it*, that is, never grow wiser." *Sermons*, p. 52, *Note*.

† The author of an "Address to the Candidates for Orders, &c." 1787, says, that if Dr. Priestley had lived in the time of Christ, "he would have been among the foremost of those whose detestable hands were lifted up to destroy the God of their life, the author of their eternal salvation." See *New Ann. Reg.* VIII. p. [222].

‡ The following advice "to all gentlemen school-boys, who are designed for the university of Oxford," was given nearly a century ago:

"Never explain your opinions, but let your declarations be, that you are churchmen, and that you believe as the church believes.—Suppress, as much as possible, that busy spirit of curiosity, which too often fatally exerts itself in youthful breasts; but if (notwithstanding all your non-inquisitiveness) the strong beams of truth will break in upon your minds, let them shine inwardly; disturb not the public peace with your private discoveries and illuminations; no, if you have any concern for your welfare and prosperity, let Aristotle be your guide absolute in philosophy, and Athanasius in religion." *Terræ-Filius*, (No. XXXI. May 1, 1721,) Ed. 3, 1754, pp. 167, 168. See the Correspondence of *Wakefield* with the late Dr. Bennet, Bishop of Cloyne, *Mon. Repos.* XV. pp. 512—514.

According to these wise maxims, his dear Charles ought to be a *Pagan* with *Pagans*, a *Mahometan* with *Mahometans*, and a *Christian* only with *Christians;* that is, he is to be of no religion at all; and then, indeed, he may subscribe any thing. This is the wisdom that is ascribed to the *Vicar of Bray*, who, in all the revolutions in this country, about the time of the Reformation, like *a wise and good man*, was consistent in keeping his preferment.* What this wise father meant by subscribing as *a layman*, or as *a term of peace and communion*, is best known to himself. I am utterly unable to divine it; and as little would it have been comprehended by those who framed these articles, who certainly meant to enforce *consent in matters of faith.*

The same excellent judge of this controversy, who says, (p. 25,) that he is "no bigot to orthodoxy," (in which I verily believe he says truly,) and that, "when he was a young man he was inclined to think freely on these subjects, and was a little staggered at the doctrine of the Trinity," speaks of the opinion of Dr. Clarke, and even that of Dr. Price, as "differing from orthodoxy by a slight distinction," whereas he says, that my opinions (which are infinitely nearer to those of Dr. Price than Dr. Price's are to the standard of orthodoxy) "approach very near to those of Hobbes and Spinoza, in their atheistical tendency," and, (p. 9,) that on my principles I may as well give up the belief of a Deity as that of the Trinity." You will not, I hope, expect from me a serious confutation of such absurd calumny as this. I am, &c.

* "The Vicar of Bray, in Berkshire, [commemorated in a popular song,] was a Papist under the reign of Henry the Eighth, and a Protestant under Edward the Sixth; he was a Papist again under Queen Mary, and at length became a Protestant in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. When this scandal to the gown was reproached for his versatility of religious creeds, he made answer, 'I cannot help that: but, if I changed my religion, I am sure I kept true to my principle; which is, to live and die Vicar of Bray!'" *Curiosities of Literature*, 1791, pp. 392, 393.

One of *Wakefield's* correspondents, in 1778, "Mr. Wilde, of Chadkirk," who, "continued through life on a small cure of *forty pounds* a-year," because he could not "repeat his subscription," thus describes the compliant disposition of his clerical contemporaries: "I am verily persuaded, that if the *Bible* was burnt to-morrow, and the *Alcoran* introduced and established in its stead, we should still, provided the emoluments were the same, have plenty of BISHOPS, PRIESTS AND DEACONS." *Memoirs*, I. p. 166.

"Gentlemen school-boys—designed for Oxford," were thus instructed in 1721: "You go thither, prepossessed with a sanguine, but ignorant opinion,—that you are to follow what in your conscience you think right, and to disclaim what you judge wrong.—I advise you to shake off this childish prejudice.—Your only safe way is to carry along with you consciences *chartes blanches*, ready to receive any impression that you may please to stamp upon them." *Terræ-Filius*, (No. XXXI.,) I. pp. 166, 167.

LETTER VII.

Of a Letter addressed to me by an Under-graduate.

GENTLEMEN,

THERE is another publication * I shall take more particular notice of, not that it has more of real plausibility in it, but because it has been more noticed by the world, and because it is written by a young man, an *Under-graduate of Oxford*,† perhaps the very *Charles* to whom the preceding letter is addressed. Indeed, he appears to be a very docile youth. The oldest fellow of a college could not have imbibed his father's maxims, or have profited more by the sermons delivered at St. Mary's, than he has done. After learning himself, he justly thinks himself sufficiently qualified to teach others.

So perfectly indifferent is this well-tutored young man to the pursuit of truth, that he ludicrously represents myself, and all who are engaged in it, as *John Gilpin*, and *the man at Hughes's*,‡ and himself and his friends as unconcerned spectators, standing aghast at our performances. Two centuries ago, *Luther* and *Melancthon*, *Zuinglius* and *Calvin*, were the *performers*, and the *Catholics* in general the *gaping crowd*.

After I had written my *Letter to Mr. Pitt*, [1787,] I thought I had gone too far in representing the English universities as "stagnant waters, offensive to the neighbourhood," and really meant to make a public retraction of it; but I suspended this design, when I perused this *letter*, which was

* "A Letter to the Rev. Dr. Priestley, by an Under-graduate," 1787.

† The Letter relating to *the Under-graduate of Oxford* was written before the report of its author being the Dean of Canterbury reached me; and as the writer begins with saying, "I am one of the young men to whom you have offered your services, as a director of their theological studies;" it is barely credible that a man of his character should affirm what cannot be termed less than *an absolute falsehood*. If the report be without foundation, the dean will, no doubt, take an early opportunity of disclaiming a publication so unworthy of him. (*P.*)

Dr. Priestley has declared his great aversion to writing under, or ever addressing, a feigned character. (See Vol. I. Memoirs 52, IV. p. 326, *Note.*) Yet his censure of Dr. Horne is scarcely justified by the occasion. The Dean of Canterbury might, surely, according to an allowed practice, assume the character and adopt the style of an *Under-graduate*, without any breach of integrity; though under favour of that, or any other disguise, to ridicule a serious inquiry after scriptural truth, was unworthy of a sober disputant.

That the Dean of Canterbury was this *Under-graduate*, though the *Letter* is not in the collection of his writings, is fully admitted by his biographer. See Dr. Horne's *Life* in Works, I. p. 135.

‡ *Letter*, p. 5. (*P.*)

read with applauding avidity by many, and was never censured, as it ought to have been, by the heads of the *University;* though it abounds with such maxims and reasonings, as ought to be reprobated as nuisances in every free country, or where there is the least regard for truth and integrity. For your instruction, gentlemen, I shall animadvert upon a few passages in that performance, and especially on those in which the author defends your subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, at the time of matriculation; a thing so manifestly absurd, that the very mention of it is sufficient to expose it.

"To make an oral profession, amounts," he says, "to the same thing with setting our hands to a paper which contains it. But who, from the beginning, was ever admitted into the Christian church without first having made such a profession?"*

But, he is greatly mistaken, if he imagine that any persons were admitted to the profession of Christianity, in the primitive ages, without allowing time to be instructed in the principles of it, and without giving some evidence that they saw reason for making the profession. Supposing that any person had come to an apostle and said, "I hear you teach a religion which is called the Christian. I am entirely ignorant of it, or of the reasons by which it is supported; but if you will please to baptize me, I may learn these particulars afterwards." Do you think that any apostle would have baptized such a person? Did not the Christian church, in the early ages, always keep persons a considerable time in the class of *catechumens*, in which they were regularly instructed in the principles of Christianity, before they were admitted to baptism.

Now, is any thing like this done at your universities? Do the persons who admit students, and receive their subscriptions, tell them that, before they can be admitted to the privileges of the place, they must signify their assent to a certain number of articles of faith, and that it behoves them to consider whether they can admit them or not? Do they give you proper *time* for this consideration, and refuse to receive your subscriptions unless you can give an account of the articles to be subscribed, and of your reasons for assenting to them? Indeed, I fear that the conduct of the heads of your universities is very different from that of any ministers in the Christian church for a long period of time.

* *Letter*, p. 25. (*P.*)

This young gentleman makes another objection to the abolition of subscription which I should never have thought of, when he says, "I cannot renounce Paganism and embrace Christianity, might a Heathen have said; for though I now think the former to be false, and the latter to be true, I will not pretend to say when my creed will be fixed: I may, on farther examination, think exactly the reverse."* With this, those who receive a man's present confession of faith have nothing to do. The apostles did not refuse to admit a person to baptism because he might afterwards apostatize, though they knew this to be a possible case, because it often happened. When you subscribe your Thirty-nine Articles, you do not, I imagine, engage never to think otherwise. This would be curious indeed. However, not having been educated in your universities, I may be ignorant of their constitution; and if this be the case, it is an objection to your subscriptions with which I was not acquainted.

Another sentiment in his letter is even more extraordinary than would be the practice of *subscribing for life;* as it implies a degree of obsequiousness and abjectness of mind, at which I should have thought that the spirit of any man, and especially that of a young man, and an Englishman, must have revolted. "If," says he, "the compilers were mistaken in an article, it is incumbent on our governors, when convinced of such mistake, to alter or expunge that article."† Nothing, then, it seems, is incumbent on *yourselves.* You must receive whatever your governors are pleased to prescribe; and should they think proper to give you the articles of a *Popish*, a *Presbyterian*, or a *Mahometan* creed, you have nothing to do but to sign them. You do not even claim the

* *Letter*, p. 6. (*P.*) With reference to the sneer on Dr. Priestley's creed not being fixed, (see *supra*, p. 414,) upon which "Dr. Horne runs divisions without end," Mr. Lindsey has the following remarks:

"In the sense in which Dr. Priestley declares this, you will find that good man, Archbishop Tillotson, agreeing with him, as will also every person of good sense and calm reflection, and that is under no wrong bias. For that worthy prelate, in his funeral sermon for Dr. Whichcot, having mentioned it as customary with learned men, at a certain age, 'to *make their understandings*,' as he expresses it, 'and to fix and settle their judgments on important points, from which they were not to recede,' he commends his deceased friend, that '*he was so wise as to be willing to learn to the last*;' i. e. he had never any fixed creed." *Vind. Priestl.* pp. 77, 78. See *Mem. of Lindsey*, p. 199.

Of Luther's three requisites for a Christian minister, the last was *to be always a learner.* "Tria verbi ministro facienda, evolvere biblia, orare serio, et *semper discipulum manere.*" See *Melch. Adam*, quoted in Robinson's *Claude*, 1779, p. 22.

† *Letter*, p. 27. (*P.*)

liberty of expostulating with your governors. Every thing they do must be from their own motion.

The same servile disposition appears in another passage of his letter: "You exhort us to associate and pray relief from subscription to the articles of the Church of England. Why? That we may be free to change as you have changed. But, Sir, we desire not to do so."* That is, he does not wish to have the power of changing, not even of getting right, if he were ever so far wrong. Here he discovers plain marks of the *chain*, which the wolf discovered on the neck of the well-fed dog in the fable, and of its having been worn a considerable time. Let me range at large, and have, at least, the power of going where I please, though I may sometimes go where I should not. For the same reason for which this *Under-graduate* contemptuously rejects his *religious* liberty, he would, no doubt, reject *civil* liberty also; and I suppose he would be equally proud of both his chains.

What he farther says on the subject of *authority*, (which has no meaning at all, if it do not mean authority in matters of religion, or receiving a creed imposed by others,) is in the highest degree disgraceful in any place of liberal education, which ought to be devoted to inquiry after truth, and the use of our reason and best judgment in the inquiry. "You are an enemy," he says, "to *authority;* but when all is said, in many instances it must take place. Some things we must at first receive on the authority of our parents, others on that of our tutors, and others on that of our governors, ecclesiastical and civil. In all, or any of these, it is possible we may afterwards discover, or think we discover, errors."† Indeed, gentlemen, if errors should not be found, or, which is the same thing with respect to ourselves, be *supposed* to be found, in a creed consisting of thirty-nine complex articles, composed above two hundred years ago, in the very dawn of the reformation from Popery, by persons who now exercise their own reason on the subject, it would be very extraordinary indeed. But of these acknowledged errors, and the consequence of requiring a subscription to them, this *Under-graduate* makes very light.

"We pity," he adds, "with all our hearts, the poor old gentleman of sixty, who lamented with so many tears to you, his confessor, (having, perhaps, unfortunately first taken you for his tutor,) that he had subscribed to the doc-

* *Letter*, p. 25. *(P.*

† *Ibid.* p. 28. *(P.)*

trine of the Trinity and the incarnation of the Son of God. Inconveniences may follow in every possible case; but of inconveniences we must choose the least; and it is better that a few individuals suffer temporal loss, than that the church should profess no faith, through fear of professing a false one."* All this, you cannot deny, might have been said, and even with more plausibility than at present, before the Reformation. The adversaries of *Luther* might have said to him, "We must have a creed, and this creed may contain errors. But it is better that it should be so, than that we should have no creed at all; and as to those who cannot subscribe to it, let them leave the church, and the emoluments of it, to those who can." But who, then, gentlemen, would be left in it? Not the inquisitive, or the conscientious, but as many of the unthinking, the dishonest, and unbelievers, as could get into it; and when once you have admitted such characters as these, you have no means of getting them out. They will promise and subscribe any thing.

The maxim that "authority once established must be submitted to," which is shamelessly avowed by Dr. Balguy,† is wonderfully convenient for this writer's purpose. It may be compared to a coat that equally suits heat or cold, wet or dry, and will carry you through the world; for, go where you will, among *Papists*, *Mahometans*, or *Pagans*, you will find *authority;* and to this, of whatever kind it be, and in what manner soever it has been established, this tame *Undergraduate* will make no difficulty of submitting.

I cannot sufficiently express my indignation at such profligate maxims; and I must say, that the seminaries in which they are taught are nothing less than nuisances in a free country. But I trust there is a prospect of better things even in *Oxford*. This *Under-graduate*, however, I perceive, has no idea of any other Christian churches than such as are framed on such maxims as these. "As to a church without

* *Letter*, p. 28. (*P.*)

† In his "Sermon on Church-Authority, preached at Lambeth Chapel, [1768,] and published by order of the Archbishop." "Dr. Balguy's Positions," are examined in Sect. ix. of Dr. Priestley's "Essay on the First Principles of Government," 1771.

"Dr. Balguy," says Archdeacon Blackburne, "speaks of the folly of 'going to the Scriptures for what is not to be found in them;' meaning, the foundation of church-authority, or, in other words, of national establishments. The consequence is, that those national establishments will bid the fairest for *permanency*, which have their greatest supports from human power, and the least countenance from the Scriptures. But, then, these are the establishments against which the cries of the Christian reformer are the loudest. *Ergo*, the Christian reformer is a wronghead, the whitewasher of a Negro." *Confessional*, Ed. 3, 1770, *Advertisement*, pp. ix. x

any confession," he says, "which should receive into its bosom all the different sects and discordant opinions now roaming about the world, we have no conception of such a church; nor, if such a one could be framed, or when framed, subsist for a twelvemonth, do we desire to be members of it!" *

In this case, then, he would not have been a member of the church that was established by the apostles; for they required nothing besides faith in the divine mission of Christ, as the term of communion with them; and this is the only article of faith that is properly essential to Christianity. This is the maxim of *Unitarian* churches, which have subsisted many twelvemonths, and which, I doubt not, will subsist when the Church of England, as by law established, shall be forgotten.

So much more liberal are even the modern *Catholics* than this *Under-graduate* of *Oxford*, that I lately heard a most respectable priest of that communion say, that he would have nothing in any public liturgy, or confession of faith, but what all Christians, in all ages, and at all times, could agree in. *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, was his language; which I am informed was also that of the excellent *Hales of Eton*, a member of the Church of England. Where, Sirs, must this *Under-graduate* have lived to have got so contracted and so dark a mind; when the sunshine of liberality has reached even the Church of *Rome?* Must it be said, that the very last footsteps of bigotry shall be in *Oxford?*

Before he can be authorized to pronounce, as he now takes upon himself to do, what *may*, and what *may not* exist, and exist with advantage, in the world at large, he must look beyond the precincts of your University. A man who has never seen or heard of any animals besides those of England, would say, that the elephant and rhinoceros were mere chimeras.

Go upon the Continent, and you will see what you cannot in England, many *Catholic* and many *Protestant* states admitting to offices of the highest trust and power, persons of all religions indiscriminately. And go to *North America*, you will see a large country, of greater extent than the whole of Europe, in many parts of which there is a strong, general sense of religion, without the civil establishment of any particular mode of it; and yet the people live at peace, and

* *Letter*, p. 27. *(P.)*

in good harmony with one another. These things are deemed impossible at *Oxford*, but they are realized in the world.

As to the many particular opinions, of which this writer lightly, very lightly indeed, descants, I shall not enter into them in this letter to you, (it being evident that he has not yet read my *Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit*, which he takes upon him to censure, and acknowledges he had not read Mr. Lindsey's *Sequel* any farther than p. 87,*) but I hold myself ready to discuss them with more able opponents. That the genuine sense of scripture, and the general tenor of it, are clearly in favour of what I have advanced, I have no doubt; and as to the principal of them, on which every thing else of consequence depends, I am now, in my "History of the Early Opinions concerning Christ," earnestly calling upon his superiors, such as Dr. Horne, Mr. White, and Mr. Howes, to prove the existence of that doctrine which he holds so sacred, in the three first centuries of Christianity; a period in which there is no want of records, to prove what were the opinions of both the learned and the unlearned. The evidence which I have produced, that the Christian church was originally *Unitarian*, has now been some time before the world, and it challenges the most rigorous examination of his masters.

This *Under-graduate* ironically thanks me for "my compliment to your Universities, as resembling pools of stagnant waters, secured by dams and mounds, and offensive to the neighbourhood."† If you would wipe away the reproach, make a proper outlet for your stagnant water; let learning flow at *Oxford* as freely as the *Isis* in its neighbourhood; and admit not only any native of Great Britain, but any inhabitant of the world, to enjoy the advantages of it, unfettered by your illiberal subscriptions. When I am asked, as I often am, by foreigners, at which of our Universities I was educated, and am obliged to say in reply, that at neither of them would myself, or any son of mine, be admitted to study, I blush for you and for my country. You ought to blush for yourselves. When I was lately at Oxford, and was struck beyond my expectation with the noble advantages for study of which you are possessed, I could not help saying with Horace, *Cur eget indignus quisque, te divite?*‡ A professor in the University of *Cracow*, who lately visited me, and who had come through Oxford in his way to Birmingham, told me, he was absolutely astonished to find that

* *Letter*, p. 29. (*P.*)

† *Ibid.* p. 15. (*P.*)

‡ *Satirarum*, Lib. ii. Sat. ii. 103.

such a seminary as that is, was not open to all the world, and that he should hardly have believed the fact, if he had not been informed of it at the place. In his own University he said, the professors, indeed, must be *Catholics*, but the students might be of any religion. He said, they had several *Protestants*, and some *Jews*. In another part of Poland, he informed me that there is an University countenanced by the government, in which all the professors are Protestants. With respect to *liberality*, we shall soon, to appearance, be once more the *divisi toto orbe Britanni*. Let those blush whom it may concern.

I am sorry to see so able a writer as Mr. Paley (whose work is, in several respects, very justly admired in the Universities) defend the subscription to the articles of the Church of England on so very poor a ground, as a supposition that it was the intention of the compilers of them to exclude from the church only the *Papists*, the *Anabaptists*, and the *Puritans;* and, therefore, that any person who belongs to none of these classes, may safely subscribe them. "They," says he, "who contend that nothing less can justify subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles, than the actual belief of each and every separate proposition contained in them, must suppose that the legislature expected the consent of ten thousand men, and that in perpetual sucession, not to one controverted proposition, but to many hundreds. It is difficult to conceive how this could be expected by any who observed the incurable diversity of human opinion upon all subjects short of demonstration."*

* "Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy," 1785, 4to, p. 181. (*P.*)

"I blush for him," says *Wakefield*, "I blush for this degradation of my species, when I see a man like Dr. Paley, of great worth and talents, and whose sentiments, from their general diffusion, must be so important to society, when I see that author stain the pages of his incomparable book with such a shuffling chapter on *subscription to articles of religion.*

"The question is not, he knows very well, without any information from me, what a *legislature*, little versed in the genuine principles of Christian liberty, might expect from the subject, but for what the subject *in reality engages*. Whether the words and conduct of the subscriber, in all plain construction of language, and conformably to every interpretation of human actions, do not imply an acceptance of the contents of those *articles*, for *religious truths?*" *Mem. of Wakefield*, I. pp. 129—131.

"What," says *Whiston*, "will become of all oaths, promises, and securities among men, if the plain, real truth and meaning of words be no longer the measure of what we are to profess, assert, or practise; but every one may, if he do but openly declare it, put his own strained interpretation, as he pleases, upon them; especially if this be to be allowed in the most sacred matters of all, the signing articles of faith, the making solemn confessions of the same, and the offering up public prayers, praises, and doxologies to the GREAT GOD, in the solemn assemblies of his worship? This I own *I* dare not do, at the peril of my salvation." *Hist. Mem. of Clarke*, Ed. 3, 1748, p. 40.

But how are we to judge of men's intentions, but by their language? Absurd, no doubt, it was, to expect what Mr. Paley states; but the compilers of the articles certainly *did* expect it, or they would have had recourse to different and shorter expedients. Had they meant nothing more than to exclude *Papists*, *Anabaptists*, and *Puritans*, they would have confined their subscription to such articles as were inconsistent with their peculiar tenets. Can Mr. Paley believe that, if any one of them had been asked, whether he did not mean to exclude all *Arians* and *Socinians* from the Church of England, he would not have replied in the affirmative? And, therefore, according to Mr. Paley's own ideas, none of *them* ought to subscribe.

It is now, I find, very much the custom to say, that you may safely subscribe the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, provided you think that it is, upon the whole, the best constituted of all the established churches, or that you think it preferable to any of the sects of the Dissenters, though there are many things that you disapprove of in it, and many of the particular articles that you do not think to be true.

But can you think that this was the idea of those who framed the articles, or has there been any act of the legislature, since their times, that authorizes such a subscription? And certainly there is no other power that has a right to define the meaning of subscription.

If, however, this be your own real meaning in subscribing, honestly declare it at the time of subscription, and see how it will be received. At present, when you subscribe to all the articles together, (which is the same thing as subscribing to each of them separately,) you assert some truths and some falsehoods. But is there any other case in which the telling of some truths will excuse the telling of any falsehoods? What would you think of any man who, when upon his oath, should do so in a court of justice? And is not a deliberate subscription a thing as solemn as that, and a case that requires as scrupulous an adherence to exact truth?

Besides, if a general preference of the constitution of the Church of England would justify your subscription to *all* her articles, you ought at least to have examined whether it is entitled to that preference, by a careful comparison of it with other churches; and you ought to be particularly upon your guard, lest the external advantages of an established and endowed church do not lay some bias on your

judgment. But can you say that you have done any thing of this, at the time of your subscription, whether at matriculation or afterwards?

Far would I be, gentlemen, from leading you to despise your tutors or your parents, or to resist any *proper authority*, as several of my opponents more than insinuate. I know the feelings of both parent and tutor, and am sensible how necessary it is that young persons should submit, and in some cases even implicitly, to their superiors. But there is a power to which myself, my children, and my pupils are equally subject, and to this we all owe the greatest deference. We are all the children of God, and he is styled *the God of truth;* and you need not be told that you must *obey God rather than men.*

As you value the favour of God, therefore, you must respect *truth* and *sincerity;* and on no consideration, at the injunction of no authority whatever, should you declare, in any form, that you believe any doctrine to be true, when you know that you have not duly considered it, and, therefore, cannot tell whether it be so or not. The doctrine being of itself true, will not excuse you. Your declaration implies that you *believe* it to be true, and, consequently, that you have seen sufficient *reason* to believe it, that is, that you have duly examined it; otherwise you might just as well subscribe the Thirty-nine Articles at your baptism, or have your godfathers or godmothers subscribe them for you.

Let me recommend to your perusal an excellent work of the late Archdeacon Blackburne, entitled *the Confessional*,* in which you will see every pretence for subscribing what is not really believed, exposed as it ought to be. But surely this is a case that cannot require any arguing. Had not the temptation to subscribe, and the inconvenience of not subscribing, been so great, we should never have heard of subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles, as *articles of peace* or *communion*, or any other of those wretched subterfuges that we now hear of, but which would have been reprobated with the greatest indignation by the framers of the articles, as they are by those who subscribe *bonâ fide* at this day.

What Dr. Croft† says of the clergy, applies with equal force to all who join in worship with them. "What ought

* First published in 1766; a third Edition 1770; since republished in the author's *Works*, 1804. He died in 1787. See Vol. III. p. 378. It is remarkable that this author was so inconsistent, that in the case of Mr. Lindsey, he "utterly disapproved the measure of leaving the church." See Mr. Belsham's *Mem. of Lindsey*, p. 76.

† See *infra*, p. 507.

to be imagined," he says, "concerning those who enter the holy temple, and offer supplications to God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, and yet disbelieve them to be objects of adoration? Is not the sin of hypocrisy and duplicity aggravated when committed in the more immediate presence of Him unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid?"* Unless, therefore, you really believe Christ to be a proper object of worship, you ought neither to subscribe a declaration that he is so, nor, on any account, join in such worship.

I am, &c.

LETTER VIII.

Of Dr. Croft's Bampton Lectures.

GENTLEMEN,

THOUGH Dr. Croft's *Sermons* do not immediately concern myself, yet as they relate to the subject of my address to you, I cannot wholly pass them without notice. He avows himself a friend to freedom of inquiry, but advances many things utterly inconsistent with it; and the general tendency of all his discourses is evidently to discourage it. But his own faith is so great, that it is the less to be wondered at, that he should expect to find a considerable degree of it in others.

"If transubstantiation," he says, "prayers for the dead, purgatory, or any other part of their institution" (viz. that of the *Catholics)* "which Protestants reject, had been found in the sacred writers, our opposition would be unwarrantable. We should be found to fight against God."† This brings to my mind the story of a good old woman, who, on being asked whether she believed the literal truth of *Jonah* being swallowed by a whale, replied, *yes*, and added, that if the Scriptures had said that *Jonah* swallowed the whale, she should have believed it too. How a man can be said to *believe* what is, in the nature of things, *impossible*, on any authority, I cannot conceive. Perhaps Dr. Croft can explain the mental process by which it is performed.

This writer has formed the highest idea of the importance of a civil establishment of religion, and he ascribes every mischief to sectaries; while others, who are sufficiently attached to an establishment, have the generosity to acknowledge that sectaries are of some use, at least, like an

* *Sermons*, p. 129. *(P.)* † *Ibid.* p. 125. *(P.*

opposition to government. "If our Jerusalem," he says, "were at unity with herself, if her inhabitants all spake the same thing, if there were no divisions among them, &c., the general interest of Christianity would daily be improved."*

Now it requires but little discernment, and a little knowledge of history and of the world, to see that the reverse of this must be true. The *Catholics* might with the same reason say of *their* church what Dr. Croft does of the Church of England, and might exclaim against the Reformers in general, as much as he does against the Dissenters of this country. But is not the state of the Catholic Church much improved since the Reformation? And is it not equally evident that the clergy of the Church of England are much more learned, and more exemplary in their conduct, in consequence of there being Dissenters, and those not despicable? Is not an useful emulation excited by this means? What learned works are produced by the divines of *Sweden* and *Denmark*, where there are no Dissenters?†

Sectaries, no doubt, give the divines of the establishment some trouble, as we see in the present controversy; but the *Dean of Canterbury* allows that the discipline is not without its use. Does not the opposition they meet with make them give greater attention to their principles; and if they be well founded, will they not stand the firmer in consequence of it? It is nothing but *error* that can finally suffer by discussion. Truth ever seeks the light, and challenges investigation.

Dr. Croft himself when, in his last sermon, he has worked himself up to some degree of courage, appears to entertain no doubt with respect to the issue of any contest, and I dare say, smiles at my grains of gun-powder. "The attempts to

* *Sermons*, p. 169. (*P.*)

† *Algernon Sydney*, after his public "employment in *Denmark* and *Sweden*," thus speaks of their *priests* in a letter "to his father, Robert Earl of Leicester," dated Sept. 8, 1660:

"In all the countryes that I haue passed through, they are the most ignorant people that euer I met with of that profession, excepting that most of them speake a littell *Latine*. The most eminent men amongst them, learne to understand *English*; their libraryes are full of *Baxter*, *Burroughes*, and other English Puritane sermon books, and out of them they preach. I was acquainted with one *Brokman*, in Denmark, who had bin in England; he hath all the books of that kind, that I think haue comme out theis twenty yeares; knowes nothing but what he learnes by rote out of them, and by theire help is grown soe eminent, that about tow moneths since, he was promoted to the best bishoprick in Denmark, next to that of Roskyld." See the *Sydney Papers*.

In the same letter is the following testimony to the impolicy of an enforced uniformity. "Lubeck *decayes dayly*, which is by all men attributed to theire stiffenesse in matters of religion, in admitting none to liue amongst them but Lutherans."

overturn our establishment," he says, "have met with no success equal to the sanguine expectations of our adversaries. The numbers of the discontented bear no proportion to the whole ecclesiastic body, many of whom search the Scriptures, peruse the fathers, and consult every source of information with unremitting zeal and industry. The spirit of inquiry ought not to be restrained by human laws, and to that spirit alone we wish to be indebted for the permanence of our church."*

This is the language of courage, and of generosity; but this paragraph is by no means in unison with many other parts of the sermons. In some of them he almost adopts the language of despair. "We are surrounded," he says, "by so numerous an host of adversaries, that we must be cautious how we put on our spiritual armour, and lest we expose to danger the walls of our defenced city. All our vigilance will be scarce sufficient for the conflict."† The prayer that follows is that of men who find themselves reduced to the last extremity: "May He who teacheth man knowledge, and giveth strength for the battle, support and assist us! May he give a blessing to the weakest and most imperfect endeavours, and may zeal and sincerity compensate for the weakness of our performances;" that is, may God give to our weak arguments all the effect of strong ones, which I suppose he expects from the infatuation of their opposers. This diffidence, you observe, is expressed in the very opening of his first discourse. And in the course of his work he drops several hints of the propriety of a little *human*, as well as *divine aid*. He mentions "a just extent of power," the use of which prudence alone restrains, and that we "should have no reason to complain if we were restrained by the civil magistrate from expressing our sentiments on certain subjects."‡

Though one of his texts is *Luke* xii. 57, "Yea, and why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?" he says, the "principle which has given a sanction to all the wildness and extravagance of enthusiasts and sectaries is this, whatever right any body of men claim to separate from a church once established, the same right every individual may claim to form a system of doctrines and opinions for himself;"§ and also, "it was an absurdity reserved for modern days, to imagine that every man was qualified, and authorized, to

* *Sermons*, p. 195. (*P.*)
† *Ibid.* p. 2. (*P.*)
‡ *Ibid.* p. 131. (*P.*)
§ *Ibid.* p. 92. (*P.*)

frame a system of belief for himself."* Now does not his text sufficiently authorize any man to do this, and did not *Luther* act upon that authority? Did not *Calvin* form a system of belief for himself, before any state adopted it?

Dr. Croft speaks with particular caution on the doctrine of the *Trinity*, and considers all attempts to explain it as one of *the abuses of reason*. "That every person," he says, "in the ever-blessed Trinity is God, and Lord, no one denies, who believes in the Trinity; but to speak of them collectively, as *three Gods* and *three Lords*, has an air of polytheism."† But surely it would be no *abuse* of reason, but a capital *use* of it, to shew that this is nothing more than an *air* of polytheism, and not the *reality*. For, after saying that the *Father* is God, the *Son* equally God, and the *Holy Ghost* God also, it is very natural to count them up, and say that then there must be *three* Gods, since 1+1+1=3. It must certainly be a very laudable use of reason to extricate men from this great difficulty respecting revelation.

It is always deemed a great advantage to be able to devise familiar illustrations of abstract propositions. Few of them can be proved to satisfaction that are incapable of it. And had this doctrine been likely to receive any advantage from attempts to explain it, it can hardly be doubted but that Dr. Croft would have recommended, rather than have discouraged them.

This writer enumerates several other abuses of reason; but if you consider them all, you will find that they agree in this one circumstance, viz. that the discussion of the articles he specifies would probably be attended with some inconvenience to the established system.

He says, "Nor can we forbear wondering that, after the *Defensio Fidei Nicænæ*, published by an eminent prelate, and after a late abstract of the opinions of the fathers of the three first centuries, the author of which received from this place a just tribute of gratitude, the unlearned should be told that the divinity of the Son and Holy Ghost was a doctrine of a later date." ‡

In my turn, I may be allowed to express my surprise, that any person, who has given the least attention to the present controversy, should hold this language. I allow all that Bishop Bull and Dr. Burgh ascribe to the fathers of the second and third century; I allow that they held the doctrine of the divinity of the Son, at least; but it was in a

* *Sermons*, p. 76. *(P.)* † *Ibid.* p. 126. *(P.)* ‡ *Ibid.* p. 78. *(P.)*

qualified sense, and by no means the same that was maintained after the Council of *Nice*. I have also distinctly shewn whence the notion of these fathers was borrowed; but what I maintain, and by evidence drawn from their own writings, is, that while the learned Christians were *Trinitarians*, the common people, who had no knowledge of *Platonism*, were simply *Unitarians;* and that therefore the probability is, that such was the faith of the apostles. Let Dr. Croft, or any future Bampton Lecturer, examine and refute my arguments if he can. In my opinion they cannot choose a more important, or a more seasonable topic. What signifies thundering from a distant bastion, when the enemy is breaking open a gate, where the artillery cannot reach him? Let the most strenuous efforts be made where the danger is most pressing.

I observe that one of the subjects particularly specified by Mr. Bampton is, "the authority of the writings of the primitive fathers, as to the faith and practice of the primitive church." Let the heads of colleges, then, (who, I find, have the nomination of the preacher,) appoint a person the most eminent for his acquaintance with ecclesiastical history; and let him be directed to prove, in opposition to what I have advanced, in my "History of Early Opinions concerning Christ," that the great body of unlearned Christians in the primitive times were *Trinitarians*. You have every advantage for these researches at Oxford, whereas we, who are not permitted to study at either of your Universities, can only be said to gather the crumbs that fall from your table.

Rejoicing that you enjoy noble advantages for which I have often sighed, and hoping that they will not be lost upon you,

I am, Gentlemen,
Your sincere well-wisher,
J. PRIESTLEY.

P. S. I shall take this opportunity of acknowledging a mistake I made in my former Letters; having been since informed that, at Cambridge, the Thirty-nine Articles are not subscribed at matriculation, but only on admission to the degree of Master of Arts; though the students there are obliged to attend the service of the Church of England from the first, and to declare that they are *bonâ fide* members of it when they commence Bachelors. I hope that the attempt which the members of that University are now [1788] making to relieve themselves still more, will be attended with success.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

ARGUMENTS FROM HISTORY AGAINST THE DIVINITY AND PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST;

*Or a Summary View of the Evidence for the Primitive Christians having held the Doctrine of the Simple Humanity of Christ.**

(See *supra*, p. 46.)

1. It is acknowledged by early writers of the orthodox persuasion, that two kinds of heresy existed in the times of the apostles, viz. that of those who held that Christ was simply a man, and that of the *Gnostics;* of whom some believed that Christ was man only in appearance, and others that it was only *Jesus*, and not the *Christ*, (a pre-existent spirit who descended from heaven, and dwelt in him,) that suffered on the cross. Now the apostle John animadverts with the greatest severity upon the latter, but makes no mention of the former; and can it be thought probable that he would pass it without censure if he had thought it to be an error, considering how great and how dangerous an error it has always been thought by those who have considered it as being an error at all?†

2. The great objection that Jews have always made to Christianity in its present state is, that it enjoins the worship of more Gods than one; and it is a great article with the Christian writers of the second and following centuries, to answer this objection. But it does not appear in all the book of *Acts*, in which we hear much of the cavils of the Jews, both in *Jerusalem* and in many parts of the Roman empire, that they made any such objection to Christianity *then;* nor do the apostles, either there or in their Epistles, advance any thing with a view to such an objection. It may be presumed, therefore, that no such offence to the Jews had then been given by the preaching of a doctrine so offensive to them as that of the divinity of Christ must have been.‡

3. As no Jew had originally any idea of their *Messiah* being more than a man, and as the apostles and the first Christians had certainly the same idea at first concerning Jesus, it may be supposed that, if ever they had been informed that Jesus was not a man, but either God himself, or the maker of the world under God, we should have been able to trace the *time* and the *circumstances* in which so great a discovery was made to them; and also that we should have perceived the effect which it had upon their minds; at least by some change in their manner of speaking concerning him. But nothing of this kind is to be found in the *Gospels*, in the

* See this *evidence* stated more concisely, Vol. V. pp. 505—507.

† *Maxim* [*infra* No. II.] 12. (*P.*) See Vol. V. pp. 17, 18.

‡ *Maxims* 12, 13. (*P.*) See *supra* pp. 82, 83.

book of *Acts*, or in any of the *Epistles*. We perceive marks enow of other new views of things, especially of the call of the Gentiles to partake of the privileges of the gospel; and we hear much of the disputes and the eager contention which it occasioned; but how much more must all their prejudices have been shocked by the information that a person whom they first took to be *a mere man*, was not a man, but either God himself, or the maker of the world under God!*

4. All the Jewish Christians, after the destruction of Jerusalem, which was immediately after the age of the apostles, are said to have been *Ebionites;* and these were only of two sorts, some of them holding the miraculous conception of our Saviour, and others believing that he was the son of *Joseph* as well as of *Mary*. None of them are said to have believed either that he was God, or the maker of the world under God. And is it at all credible that the body of the Jewish Christians, if they had ever been instructed by the apostles in the doctrine of the divinity or pre-existence of Christ, would so soon, and so generally, if not universally, have abandoned that faith?†

5. Had Christ been considered as God, or the maker of the world under God, in the early ages of the Church, he would naturally have been the proper object of prayer to Christians; nay, more so than God the Father, with whom, on the scheme of the doctrine of the *Trinity*, they must have known that they had less immediate intercourse. But prayers to Jesus Christ were not used in early times, but gained ground gradually with the opinion of Christ being God, and the object of worship.‡

6. *Athanasius* represents the apostles as obliged to use great caution not to offend their first converts with the doctrine of Christ's divinity, and as forbearing to urge that topic till they were first well established in the belief of his being the *Messiah*. He adds, that the *Jews*, being in an error on this subject, drew the *Gentiles* into it. *Chrysostom* agrees with *Athanasius* in this representation of the silence of the apostles in their first preaching, both with respect to the divinity of Christ and his miraculous conception. They both represent them as leaving their disciples to learn the doctrine of Christ's divinity by way of *inference* from certain expressions; and they do not pretend to produce any instance in which they taught that doctrine clearly and explicitly. §

7. *Hegesippus*, the first Christian historian, himself a *Jew*, and therefore probably an *Ebionite*, enumerating the heresies of his time, mentions several of the *Gnostic* kind, but not that of Christ being a mere man. He moreover says, that in travelling to Rome, where he arrived in the time of *Anicetus*, he found all the churches that he visited held the faith which had been taught by Christ and the apostles, which, in his opinion, was probably that of Christ being not God, but man only. *Justin Martyr* also, and *Clemens Alexan-*

* *Maxim* 13. (*P.*) See *supra*, pp. 80, 81.
† *Maxim* 6. (*P.*) See Vol. V. pp. 16, 17; *supra*, pp. 10, 11, 55.
‡ *Maxim* 14. (*P.*)
§ *Ibid.* 13. (*P.*) See Vol. V. p. 19; *supra*, pp. 70, 77, 78.

drinus, who wrote after Hegesippus, treat largely of heresies in general, without mentioning or alluding to the *Unitarians*.*

8. All those who were deemed *heretics* in early times were cut off from the communion of those who called themselves the *orthodox* Christians, and went by some particular name, generally that of their leader. But the *Unitarians* among the Gentiles were not expelled from the assemblies of Christians, but worshipped along with those who were called orthodox, and had no particular name till the time of *Victor*, who excommunicated *Theodotus*; and a long time after that, *Epiphanius* endeavoured to give them the name of *Alogi*. And though the *Ebionites*, probably about or before this time, had been excommunicated by the Gentile Christians, it was, as *Jerome* says, *only* on account of their rigid adherence to the law of Moses.†

9. The *Apostles' Creed* is that which was taught to all catechumens before baptism, and additions were made to it from time to time, in order to exclude those who were denominated *heretics*. Now, though there are several articles in that creed which allude to the *Gnostics*, and tacitly condemn them, there was not, in the time of *Tertullian*, any article in it that alluded to the *Unitarians*; so that even then any Unitarian, at least one believing the miraculous conception, might have subscribed it. It may, therefore, be concluded, that simple *Unitarianism* was not deemed heretical at the end of the second century.‡

10. It is acknowledged by *Eusebius* and others, that the ancient *Unitarians* themselves constantly asserted that their doctrine was the prevailing opinion of the Christian Church till the time of *Victor*. §

11. *Justin Martyr*, who maintains the pre-existence of Christ, is so far from calling the contrary opinion a *heresy*, that what he says on the subject is evidently an apology for his own: and when he speaks of *heretics in general*, which he does with great indignation, as no Christians, and having no communication with Christians, he mentions the *Gnostics* only. ‖

12. *Irenæus*, who was after *Justin*, and who wrote a large treatise on the subject of heresy, says very little concerning the *Ebionites*, and he never calls them *heretics*. Those Ebionites he speaks of as believing that Christ was the son of *Joseph*, and he makes no mention of those who believed the *miraculous conception*.¶

13. *Tertullian* represents the majority of the common or unlearned Christians, the *idiotæ*, as *Unitarians*; and it is among the common people that we always find the oldest opinions in any country, and in any sect, while the learned are most apt to innovate. It may therefore be presumed that, as the Unitarian doctrine was held by the common people in the time of *Tertullian*, it had been more general still before that time, and probably universal in the apostolical age. *Athanasius* also mentions it as a subject of complaint to

* *Maxim* 8. (*P.*) See Vol. V. p. 17; *supra*, pp. 12—15.
† *Maxim* 5. (*P.*) See Vol. V. pp. 20—23; *supra*, pp. 62—64.
‡ *Maxim* 7. (*P.*) See *supra*, p. 63.
§ *Maxim* 2. (*P.*) See Vol. V. pp. 22, 23; *supra*, pp. 21, 22.
‖ *Maxim* 12. (*P.*) See Vol. V. pp. 21, 22; *supra*, pp. 16, 17; *infra* No. IV.
¶ *Maxim* 12. (*P.*) See Vol. V. p. 21; *supra*, pp. 65, 66.

the orthodox of his age, that *the many*, and especially persons of *low understandings*, were inclined to the Unitarian doctrine.*

14. The first who held and discussed the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, acknowledged that their opinions were exceedingly unpopular among the unlearned Christians; that these dreaded the doctrine of the *Trinity*, thinking that it infringed upon the doctrine of the supremacy of God the Father; and the learned Christians make frequent apologies to them and to others for their own opinion.†

15. The divinity of Christ was first advanced and urged by those who had been Heathen philosophers, and especially those who were admirers of the doctrine of *Plato*, who held the opinion of a *second* God. *Austin* says, that he considered Christ as no other than a most excellent man, and had no suspicion of the word of God being incarnate in him, or how "the Catholic faith differed from the error of Photinus," (the last of the proper Unitarians whose name is come down to us,) till he read the books of *Plato;* and that he was afterwards confirmed in the *Catholic* doctrine by reading the Scriptures. *Constantine*, in his oration to the fathers of the Council of Nice, speaks with commendation of *Plato*, as having taught the doctrine of "a second God, derived from the Supreme God, and subservient to his will."‡

16. There is a pretty easy gradation in the progress of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ; as he was first thought to be a God in some qualified sense of the word, a distinguished emanation from the Supreme Mind; and then the *Logos*, or the wisdom of God personified; and this *Logos* was first thought to be only occasionally detached from the Deity, and then drawn into his essence again, before it was imagined that it had a *permanent personality* distinct from that of the source from which it sprung. And it was not till 400 years after that time that this *Logos*, or Christ, was thought to be properly equal to the Father. Whereas, on the other hand, it is now pretended that the apostles taught the doctrine of the divinity of Christ; yet it cannot be denied that in the very times of the apostles, the *Jewish* Church, and many of the *Gentiles* also, held the opinion of his being a mere man. Here the transition is quite sudden, without any gradation at all. This must naturally have given the greatest alarm, such as is now given to those who are called *orthodox* by the present *Socinians;*‖ and yet nothing of this kind can be perceived. Besides, it is certainly most probable that the Christians of those times, urged as they were with the meanness of their Master, should incline to *add to*, rather than *take from*, his natural rank and dignity. §

* *Maxims* 4, 10. *(P.)* See *supra*, pp. 23, 24, 76, 77.

† *Maxim* 10. (*P.*) See Vol. V. p. 41.

‡ *Maxim* 11. (*P.*) See Vol. V. pp. 17, 18.

§ *Maxim* 9. (*P.*) See Vol. V. p. 19; *supra*, pp. 90—92.

‖ For whom *South*, in 1665, traced what he calls "their infamous pedigree: —— first to *Faustus Socinus* and his uncle *Lelius*, and from them to *Gentilis*, and then to *Servetus*, and so through a long interval to *Mahomet* and his sect, and from them to *Photinus*, and from him to *Arius*, and from *Arius* to *Paulus Samosatenus*, and from him to *Ebion* and *Cerinthus*, and from them to *Simon Magus*, and so in a direct line to the *Devil* himself." *Sermons*, III. p. 294.

No. II.

MAXIMS OF HISTORICAL CRITICISM, BY WHICH THE PRECEDING ARTICLES MAY BE TRIED.

(See *supra*, p. 46.)

THOUGH the maxims of historical criticism are things that are well understood by all persons who attend to them, (and indeed, as they are the ultimate principles of all reasoning on these subjects, it would otherwise be in vain to appeal to them at all,) it may not be unuseful to enumerate them, and to illustrate such of them as may seem to require it. Things of a similar nature have been done by all mathematicians and critics. By the former, these ultimate propositions are called *axioms*, and by the latter, *canons of criticism*; and as I wish to reduce the species of criticism with which I and my opponents are now conversant to the greatest certainty, I have followed their example. I have, however, made no general system, but have only noted such particulars as I myself have had occasion for; and even this I am far from pretending to have executed with perfect accuracy: but I give it as a *sketch* to be examined at leisure, and to be rectified where it shall appear to be requisite.

These maxims are adapted to the preceding *Summary View* of those arguments which, I apprehend, establish my principal position, viz. that the Christian church was originally Unitarian; and therefore I have annexed to each of them the number of that article in the *Summary View* to which they correspond, that they may be compared together. I wish that Dr. Horsley and other *Trinitarians* would, in like manner, reduce into axioms the principles on which they proceed, that they may be compared with mine; and perhaps we may by this means be assisted in coming to a proper issue in this controversy. If my opponents will devise any other method that shall appear to be better adapted to gain the same desirable end, I shall heartily concur in it, and conform to it.

1. When two persons give different accounts of things, that evidence is to be preferred which is either in itself more probable, or more agreeable to other credible testimony.

2. Neither is entire credit to be given to any set of men with respect to what is reputable to them, nor to their enemies with respect to what is disreputable; but the account given by the one may be balanced by that of the other.*

3. Accounts of any set of men given by their enemies only, are always suspicious. But the confessions of enemies, and circumstances favourable to any body of men, collected from the writings of their adversaries, are deserving of particular regard.

4. It is more natural for men who wish to speak disparagingly of any sect, to undervalue their numbers, as well as every thing else relating to them; and it is equally natural for those who wish to speak respectfully of any party, to represent the members of it as more numerous than they are.†

* *Summary View*, 10. (*P.*)

† *Ibid.* 13. (*P.*)

5. When persons form themselves into societies, so as to be distinguishable from others, they never fail to get some *particular name*, either assumed by themselves, or imposed by others. This is necessary in order to make them the subject of conversation, long periphrases in discourse being very inconvenient.*

6. When particular opinions are ascribed to a particular class of men, without any distinction of the time when those opinions were adopted by them, it may be presumed that they were supposed to hold those opinions from the time that they received their denomination.†

7. When a particular description is given of a class of persons within any period of time, any person who can be proved to have the proper character of one of that class, may be deemed to have belonged to it, and to have enjoyed all the privileges of it, whatever they were.‡

8. When an historian, or writer of any kind, professedly enumerates the several *species* belonging to any *genus*, or general body of men, and omits any particular species or denomination, which, if it had belonged to the genus, he, from his situation and circumstances, was not likely to have overlooked, it may be presumed, that he did not consider that particular species as belonging to the genus.§

9. Great changes in opinion are not usually made of a sudden, and never by great bodies of men. That history, therefore, which represents such changes as having been made gradually, and by easy steps, is always the more probable on that account.‖

10. The common or unlearned people in any country, who do not speculate much, retain longest any opinions with which their minds have been much impressed; and therefore we always look for the oldest opinions in any country, or any class of men, among the common people, and not among the learned.¶

11. If any new opinions be introduced into a society, they are most likely to have introduced them who held opinions similar to them before they joined that society.**

12. If any particular opinion has never failed to excite great indignation in all ages and nations, where a contrary opinion has been generally received, and that particular opinion can be proved to have existed in any age or country when it did not excite indignation, it may be concluded that it had many partisans in that age or country. For, the opinion being the same, it could not of itself be more respectable; and, human nature being the same, it could not but have been regarded in the same light, so long as the same stress was laid on the opposite opinion.††

13. When a time is given, in which any very remarkable and interesting opinion was not believed by a certain class of people, and another time in which the belief of it was general, the introduction of such an opinion may always be known by the effects which it will produce upon the minds and in the conduct of men; by the alarm which it will give to some, and the defence of it by

* *Summary View*, 8. (*P.*) † *Ibid.* 4. (*P.*) ‡ *Ibid.* 9. (*P.*)
§ *Ibid.* 7. (*P.*) ‖ *Ibid.* 16. (*P.*) ¶ *Ibid.* 13, 14. (*P.*)
** *Ibid.* 15. (*P.*) †† *Ibid.* 1, 11, 12. (*P.*)

others. If, therefore, no alarm was given, and no defence of it was made within any particular period, it may be concluded that the introduction of it did not take place within that period.*

14. When any particular opinion or practice is necessarily or customarily accompanied by any other opinion or practice, if the latter be not found within any particular period, it may be presumed that the former did not exist within that period.†

‡ It will be perceived that the whole of this historical evidence is in favour of the proper *Unitarian* doctrine (or that of Christ being a mere man) having been the faith of the primitive church, in opposition to the *Arian* no less than the *Trinitarian* hypothesis.

As to the *Arian* hypothesis in particular, I do not know that it can be traced any higher than *Arius* himself, or at least the age in which he lived. Both the *Gnostics* and the *platonizing* Christians were equally far from supposing that Christ was a being *created out of nothing;* the former having thought him to be an emanation from the Supreme Being, and the latter the *logos* of the Father personified. And though they sometimes applied the term *creation* to this *personification*, still they did not suppose it to have been a creation out of nothing. It was only a new modification of what existed before. For God, they said, was always *rational*, (λογικος,) or had within him that principle which afterwards assumed a personal character.

Besides, all the Christian fathers, before the time of *Arius*, supposed that Christ had a human soul as well as a human body, which no Arians ever admitted; they holding that the *Logos* supplied the place of one in Christ.

Upon the whole, the *Arian* hypothesis appears to me to be destitute of all support from Christian antiquity. Whereas it was never denied that the proper *Unitarian* doctrine existed in the time of the apostles; and I think it evident that it was the faith of the bulk of Christians, and especially the unlearned Christians, for two or three centuries after Christ.

No. III.

LETTERS FROM CORRESPONDENTS.

(See *supra*, p. 51.)

HAVING received letters from two of my learned friends relating to the subject of this work, when it was nearly printed off, I take the liberty to give extracts from them in this place; being satisfied that my readers will be pleased to see them, and hoping that the writers will not be much offended at my making this use of them, without their consent, for which it is too late to apply to them. Indeed, the former letter was intended for my use; but the latter, which is from the author of the *Remarks* in my vindi-

* *Summary View*, 2, 3, 6. (*P.*) † *Ibid.* 5. (*P.*)

‡ The following paragraphs were added when the *Maxims* were annexed to the *General View*. See No. VII. *infra*.

cation, was certainly not meant for the public eye, and was written immediately after the first reading of the review of his piece. But on this account it may be more depended upon, as expressing his real feelings.

DEAR SIR, *November* 5, 1783.

I have just been reading Dr. Horsley's *Charge* against you, to which, I doubt not, you will make a proper reply. As he seems to triumph in your having, as he supposes, mistaken the sense of some *Greek* quotations; and as parallel passages are not always at hand, though common enough if we could wait for them till they occur, I take the liberty of sending you one that I have since met with in *Demosthenes*, and another from *Thucydides*.

In opposition to your interpretation of the beginning of John's gospel, he says, the natural force of οὗτος is *this person*. Very true, if the noun to which it belongs represent a person; but if the noun be only the name of a thing, then the natural force of οὗτος will be *this thing*, as appears from the following passage from *Demosthenes*, (1st *Olynthiac*,) Νυνι δε καιρος ηκει· τις οὗτος; ὁ των Ολυνθιων αυτοματος τῃ πολει. "Now comes another conjuncture; what conjuncture? That which voluntarily offers itself to the republic from the Olynthians." *Francis*.

The Doctor is much displeased with your translating ουκ αλλῳ τινι η, *nothing but*. To be sure, if it were clear from other arguments that the λογος and σοφια in question were *persons*, his translation would be the true one. But that those words cannot always be understood to mean *no other person*, will be manifest from the following passage of *Thucydides*, Lib. iv. Cap. cxxvi. p. 311:

"Ουκ αλλῳ τινι κτησαμενοι την ὑυναϛειαν, η τῳ μαχομενοι κρατειν. Qui nulla alia ratione principatum sunt adepti, quam quod (hostes) præliando superarent."

As to the other passage from *Theophilus*, of which the Doctor takes notice in his 63d page, when you come to look at it again, you will perceive that you did not exactly hit on the meaning of the last line; and I think the Doctor was a little warped by his system, when he translated God *the* word, *the* wisdom, Man. I think it pretty plain from the preceding words, τῳ Θεῳ και τῃ λογῳ, και τῃς σοφιας αυτῳ, that the words in question should be translated "that there might be God, *his* word, *his* wisdom, (and) man." But this I submit to your better judgment.

November 5, 1783.

———"What sort of faces are we to carry, since this *neighbour* of ours has 'put us to shame?' You might have got through the business: but what am *I*, a puny pedagogue, 'Iste Græculus,'* who cannot conjugate a Greek verb, nor tell whether it be perfect or defective, what am *I* to do? It is a bad business sure enough; but it is not desperate; and notwithstanding the violence of the attack, I do not feel even a single wound."

"I rather wondered that neither you, nor Mr. ——— desired me to give my authorities for what I advanced in my remarks. I

* See *supra*, p. 138.

had them ready, but I chose to keep them back. The adversary has fallen fairly into the ambuscade; and there he lies, open, as far as I can judge at present, to use his own language, to a good many 'after-claps.' I have had the *Review* but a few hours, and business has taken up some of those few, so that I have not been able to pay much attention to it. However, I have read it, and I have not perceived in it any thing that is formidable."

"I think it a favourable circumstance for my *grammatical* reputation, which this tremendous champion has taken so much pains to celebrate, that my original copy (in which the unfortunate τι that obscures and 'bastardizes' my *Greek* is not to be found) is still in being; otherwise, I suppose, I should hardly have been believed upon my word, that I could have made out the first future middle optative of συντιθεμαι, even with the help of a grammar. What a wretched mind, and what a tottering cause must that man have, who can descend to such self-degrading and ridiculous trivialities! However, I have already seen that he is not guarded against a retort of similar civilities."

This excellent critic will, I hope, be prevailed upon to give the public, at his leisure, a new edition of his valuable *Remarks*, with such additions and observations relating to the subject, as may occur to him. They will be esteemed by all good judges when the reply to them shall be forgotten.

I shall take this opportunity of saying, that the writer of these remarks is one of the few on whose friendship and approbation I place the highest value, and which I feel as a strong incentive to my labours. The good opinion of these few I am under no apprehension of ever losing; and, though I hope I should act the part which conscience dictates without that auxiliary motive, it is a great consolation to me, and much more than counterbalances the censures of all my opponents. That friendship with the wise and the virtuous which I have the happiness to possess in this world, will, I trust, be resumed, and constitute a principal part of the felicity of another.

No. IV.

OF THE PASSAGE IN JUSTIN MARTYR CONCERNING THE UNITARIANS OF HIS TIME.*

(See *supra*, p. 65.)

I THINK myself possessed of so much evidence in favour of the *Unitarian* doctrine having been maintained in the first ages of Chris-

* Και γαρ εισι τινες απο τη ημετερη γενης ὁμολογηντες αυτον Χριςον ειναι, ανθρωπον δε εξ ανθρωπων γενομενον αποφαινομενοι· οἰς ου συντιθεμαι, ηὸ' αν πλειστοι ταυτα μοι δοξασαντες ειποιεν, επειδη ηκ ανθρωπειοις διδαγμασι κεκελευσμεθα ὑπ' αιτη τη Χριςη πειθεσθαι, αλλα τοις δια των μακαριων προφητων κηρυχθεισι, και δι' αιτη διδαχθεισι. *Edit. Thirlby*, p. 234.

Thus rendered by my opponent the *Monthly Reviewer*:

"There are some of our profession who acknowledge him to be the Christ, and yet maintain that he was a man born in the natural way; to whom I could not

tianity, that I have no occasion to be solicitous about trifles with respect to it; and even with regard to the much-contested passage in *Justin Martyr*, above referred to, and of which I made some use in my late *History*,* it is quite sufficient for my purpose, that the writer here speaks of Unitarians with tenderness, and is far from treating them as *heretics;* and in this I think every reasonable man, who considers the manner in which this writer speaks of *heretics in general*, (on which occasion he specifies none but *Gnostics*,) will agree with me. If any person think otherwise, I have nothing further to say, and our readers must judge between us.

I cannot help thinking, however, with my learned Vindicator, that this passage, more critically examined, furnishes a still stronger evidence in favour of the prevalence of the Unitarian doctrine in the time of Justin.

1. Let it be considered that, in this place, as well as in his writings in general, he *labours* the proof of the pre-existence of Christ, shewing that it is consonant to the principles of Platonism, and also deducible from the writings of Moses, and other parts of the Jewish Scriptures, without referring to any other writer in support of what he advances.

2. He does not use a single acrimonious expression against those who differed from him with respect to it, which is just as any man would do, who should write in defence of a novel, or not very prevalent opinion, and one of which himself was the principal abettor. He even provides a retreat, in case he should not be able to prove his point; saying that, though he should fail in this, it would not follow that he was mistaken in the other; for that still Jesus might be the *Messiah*, (which was evidently a matter of the first consequence with him,) though he should be nothing more than a man.

3. He talks of not being overborne by the authority of any number of men, even his fellow-christians, but would adhere to the words of Christ and the sense of scripture, which is a style almost peculiar to those whose opinions are either quite novel, or at least not very prevalent.

4. The phrase, "neither do I agree with the majority of Christians, who may have objected to my opinion," which is nearly the most literal rendering of the passage, (though I would not be understood to lay much stress on that circumstance,) will naturally be construed to mean, that the majority actually *did* make the objection, or that Justin suspected they *might* make it.

yield my assent, *no, not even if the majority* of Christians should think the same; because we are commanded by Christ himself not to rely on human doctrines, but to receive those which were published by the blessed prophets, and which he himself taught us." [*Mon. Rev.* LXVIII. p. 522.]

By my *Vindicator*, more literally:

"There are some of our race (viz. *Gentiles)* who acknowledge him to be the Christ, and yet maintain that he was a man born in the natural way; to whom I do not assent, though the majority may have told me that they had been of the same opinion." [See *Mon. Rev.* LXIX. p. 317.]

Some conjecture that the original reading was ὑμετερ», instead of ἡμετερ»; and then it should be rendered some of *your race*, meaning the Jewish Christians. But there is no authority for this from any manuscript. (*P.*) See *ibid.* p. 318.

* See Vol. V. pp. 21, 22.

When I consider these circumstances, and also how apt all persons are to make their own party more numerous than it really is, I am inclined to think that, even if the passage might bear such a construction as that *Justin* meant to insinuate that the majority were with him, yet that it would not be the most natural construction, or a sufficient authority to conclude that such was the fact. I therefore think that, upon the whole, the passage has all the *appearance of an apology* (which is all that I have asserted) for an opinion different from that which, in his time, was commonly received on the subject.

I am, no doubt, influenced in my construction of this particular passage, by the persuasion that I have, from other independent evidence, that the Unitarians were, in fact, the majority of Christians in the time of Justin; that he, therefore, knew this to be the case, and could not mean to insinuate the contrary. Another person, having a different persuasion concerning the state of opinions in that age, will naturally be inclined to put a different construction upon this passage. In this case, I only wish that he would suspend his judgment till he has attended to my other arguments, and afterwards he may perhaps see this passage in the same light in which I do.

The word γενος, I think with my learned friend, refers to *natural descent;* and I therefore conclude, that Justin here meant not Christians in general, but Gentile Christians in particular; because, as he is opposing the opinion concerning Christ, which made him to be *a man born of men*, not to the doctrine of the *miraculous conception*, but only to his *pre-existence*, the only idea that he had in his mind, and to which he attended, was that of his *simple humanity;* and we have positive evidence that this was the doctrine of *all* the Jewish Christians, so that he could not speak of some of them holding it, and others not. Whereas, the Gentile Christians were divided on that subject; and some of them, even later than this, viz. in the time of *Origen*, held that, in the strictest sense of the expression, Jesus was a man born of man, being the son of *Joseph*, as well as of *Mary*. I therefore think that *Justin* meant the Gentile Christians; omitting the Jewish Christians, whose sentiments he might suppose to have been well known to the learned Jew with whom he was conversing.

Tillemont somewhere says, that the majority of the *Ebionites* seem to have believed that Christ was the son of Joseph; and as I find no mention of *two sorts* of Ebionites (one of them believing the miraculous conception, and the other not) before the time of *Origen*, it is probable that in the time of *Justin*, the *Jewish* Christians were almost wholly *Ebionites*, of the oldest denomination, believing Christ to be man born of man, in the strictest sense of the phrase; and, therefore, that, in this respect also, there could have been no pretence for any insinuation that the Jewish Christians were divided on this point; and still less, that those among them who believed Jesus to be a man born of man, were not a very great majority of them.

It is plain from the existence of such Christians, both among *Jews* and *Gentiles* in the time of *Origen*, and probably much later, which

was long after the publication of the gospels of *Matthew* and *Luke*, even in their present form, (admitting that there might be some doubt relating to the introductions to them when they were first published,) that they considered these evangelists simply as *historians*, and by no means as inspired writers; so that they thought themselves at liberty to admit or disregard their testimony to particular facts, according to their opinion of their evidence being competent or not competent in those particular cases. I have frequently avowed myself not to be a believer in the inspiration of the evangelists and apostles *as writers*, and have given my reasons pretty much at large for my opinion. I therefore, with these ancient Unitarians, hold this subject of the miraculous conception to be one with respect to which any person is fully at liberty to think as the evidence shall appear to him, without any impeachment of his faith or character as a Christian.

I shall conclude this article with observing that, without attending to minute criticisms, it is quite sufficient for my purpose, that these ancient *Unitarian* Christians, whether they held the miraculous conception or not, whether they were *Jews* or *Gentiles*, or whether *Justin* meant to represent them as (strictly speaking) the majority of Christians, or otherwise, were not treated by him *as heretics*. From this circumstance alone it may be concluded, that they were very numerous; because, whenever Unitarians have not been very numerous, and made a respectable figure among Christians, they have always been considered with great abhorrence, and have been cut off from communion with those of the orthodox persuasion.

With what rancour does *Eusebius* treat this class of Christians, both in his History and in his Treatise against *Marcellus of Ancyra!* when we know from *Athanasius*, and other authorities, that they were at that time very numerous, (though among the lower classes of people,) and probably in all parts of the Christian world.

When these things are duly considered, it can hardly be imagined but that, let this passage in Justin be construed in any manner that the words can possibly bear, it will be sufficiently to my purpose, and authorize all the use that I have made of it. But I can very well spare the passage altogether; thinking that I have evidence enough of my general position without it. After all the attention which I have given to this subject, I see no material objection to the manner in which I have expressed myself concerning it in my History. If, however, there should be a demand for a new edition of that work, I shall endeavour to make it as little exceptionable as possible, consistent with my own real opinion.

No. V.

OF THE EXCOMMUNICATION OF THEODOTUS BY VICTOR.

(See *supra*, p. 108.)

It may be objected to the evidence of *Tertullian*, concerning the *major part* of Christians being *Unitarians*, that about the same time

Victor, bishop of Rome, excommunicated *Theodotus*, of Byzantium, for denying the divinity of Christ, which it may be thought he would not have ventured to do, if the popular prejudices had not been with him in this business. I do not think, however, that there is any contrariety betwen these two facts, when the circumstances attending them are duly considered.

Tertullian lived in Africa, where there seems to have been a greater inclination for the Unitarian doctrine than there was at Rome, as we may collect from the remarkable popularity of *Sabellius* in that country, and other circumstances. *Athanasius* also, who complains of many persons of low understanding favouring the same principles, was of the same country, residing chiefly in Egypt, though he had seen a great part of the Christian world, and was, no doubt, well acquainted with it.*

We should likewise consider the peculiarly violent character of *Victor*, who was capable of doing what few other persons would have attempted; being the same person who excommunicated all the *Eastern* churches, because they did not observe Easter at the same time that the *Western* churches did; for which he was much censured even by many bishops in the West.

Such an excommunication as this of *Theodotus*, was by no means the same thing with cutting a person off from communion with any particular church with which he had been used to communicate. Theodotus was a stranger at Rome, and it is very possible that the body of the Christian church at Rome did not interest themselves in the affair, the bishop and his clergy only approving of it; for I readily grant that, though there were some learned Unitarians in all the early ages of Christianity, the majority of the clergy were not so.

Theodotus, besides being a stranger at Rome, was a man of science, and is said by the Unitarians to have been well received by *Victor*, at first; so that it is very possible that the latter might have been instigated to what he did by some quarrel between them, of which we have no account.

Upon the whole, therefore, though *Victor* excommunicated this *Theodotus*, who was a stranger, and had perhaps made himself conspicuous, so as to have given some cause of umbrage or jealousy to him, it is very possible that a great proportion of the lower kind of people, who made no noise or disturbance, might continue in communion with that church, though they were known to be Unitarians.

* I think it very probable, that in the *Western* parts of the Roman empire in general, there were always fewer Unitarians than in the *Eastern* parts; because the gospel was not preached so early in the Western parts, perhaps not to any great extent till the greater part of the clergy were infected with Platonism. This might have been the case, especially in so remote a country as Gaul, where *Irenæus* resided, and may account for his treating the doctrine of the *Ebionites* with more severity than *Justin*, who lived in the East, where they were more numerous. On the same principles, we may account for the prevalence of *Arianism*, in all the barbarous nations bordering on the Roman empire. They had been converted to Christianity chiefly by persecuted Arians. But Arianism was at length suppressed by the influence of the Church of Rome, which also began to excommunicate the proper Unitarians in the person of *Theodotus*. (*P.*)

I am not disposed to take any advantage of Dr. Horsley's supposition, that *Theodotus* might hold the Unitarian doctrine in some more offensive form than that of the ancient *Ebionites*, and, therefore, might be more liable to excommunication; because both *Tertullian* and *Theodoret* say, that he believed the *miraculous conception*, and it is only *Epiphanius* (who lived long after the time of *Tertullian*) who asserts the contrary.* It is, indeed, pretty certain, that the opinion of Jesus being the son of Joseph, began soon to give way to the authority of the gospels of *Matthew* and *Luke*, and that it became extinct long before the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ.

No. VI.

OF JUSTIN MARTYR's ACCOUNT OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF SOME CHRISTIANS OF LOW RANK.

(See *supra*, p. 108.)

It is likewise said that the testimony of *Tertullian* is expressly contradicted by *Justin Martyr*,† who, in giving an account of the circumstances in which the Platonic philosophy agreed, as he thought, with the doctrine of Moses, but with respect to which he supposed that *Plato* had borrowed from Moses, mentions the following particulars: viz. "The power which was after the first God, or the Logos," assuming the figure of a cross in the universe, borrowed from the fixing up of a serpent (which represented Christ) in the form of a cross in the wilderness; and a third principle, borrowed from the *spirit* which Moses said moved on the face of the water at the creation; and also the notion of some fire or conflagration, borrowed from some figurative expressions in Moses relating to the anger of God waxing hot. "These things," he says, "we do not borrow from others, but all others from us. With us you may hear and learn these things from those who do not know the form of the letters, who are rude and barbarous of speech, but wise and understanding in mind; and from some who are even lame and blind; so that you may be convinced that these things are not said by human wisdom, but by the power of God."

But all that we can infer from this passage is, that these common people had learned from Moses that the world was made by the power and wisdom (or the *logos*) of God; that the serpent in the wilderness represented Christ; and that there was a spirit of God that moved on the face of the waters; in short, that these plain people had been at the source from which *Plato* had borrowed his philosophy. It is by no means an explicit declaration that these common people thought that the *Logos* and the *Spirit* were persons distinct from God. *Justin* was not writing with a view to that question, as *Tertullian* was; but only meant to say how much more knowledge was to be found among the lowest of the Christians than among the wisest of the Heathen philosophers.

Besides, Justin is here *boasting* of the knowledge of these lower

* Tillemont's *Memoirs*, VII. p. 116. (*P.*) † *Edit. Thirlby*, p. 88. (*P.*)

people, and it favoured his purpose to make it as considerable as he could; whereas Tertullian is *complaining* of the circumstance which he mentions; so that nothing but the conviction of a disagreeable truth could have extorted it from him. The same was the case with respect to Athanasius.

That the common people in *Justin's* time should understand his doctrine concerning the personification of the *Logos*, is in itself highly improbable. That this Logos, which was originally in God the same thing that *reason* is in man, should at the creation of the world assume a proper *personality*, and afterwards animate the body of Jesus Christ, either in addition to a human soul, or instead of it, is not only very absurd, but also so very *abstruse*, that it is in the highest degree improbable, *à priori*, that the common people should have adopted it. The Scriptures, in which they were chiefly conversant, could never teach them any such thing, and they could not have been capable of entering into the philosophical refinements of *Justin* on the subject. Whereas, that the common people should have believed, as *Tertullian* and *Athanasius* represent them to have done, viz. that there is but one God; and that Christ was a man, the messenger or prophet of God, and no *second* God at all, the rival as it were of the first God, is a thing highly credible in itself, and therefore requires less external evidence.

No. VII.

A GENERAL VIEW OF THE *Arguments for the Unity of God, and against the Divinity and Pre-existence of Christ; from Reason and from the Scriptures.**

(See *supra*, p. 151.)

I. Arguments from Reason against the Trinitarian Hypothesis.

That the doctrine of the Trinity could ever have been suggested by any thing in the course of *nature*, (though it has been imagined by some persons of a peculiarly fanciful turn, and previously persuaded of the truth of it,) is not maintained by any persons to whom my writings can be at all useful. I shall therefore only address myself to those who believe the doctrine on the supposition of its being contained in the *Scriptures*, at the same time maintaining, that though it is *above*, it is not properly *contrary* to reason; and I hope to make it sufficiently evident, either that they do not hold the doctrine, or that the opinion of *three divine persons constituting one God* is, strictly speaking, an *absurdity* or *contradiction*; and that it is therefore incapable of any proof, even by miracles. With this view, I shall recite, in order, all the distinct modifications of this doctrine, and shew that, upon any of them, there is either no proper *Unity* in the Divine nature, or no proper *Trinity*.

* The *arguments* from History form No. I. and No. II. of this *Appendix*.

If, with Dr. Waterland, and others who are reckoned the strictest *Athanasians*, (though their opinions were not known in the time of *Athanasius* himself,) it be supposed that there are three persons properly equal, and that no one of them has any sort of superiority over the rest, they are, to all intents and purposes, three distinct Gods. For if each of them, separately considered, be possessed of all divine perfections, so that nothing is wanting to complete divinity, each of them must be as properly *a God* as any being possessed of all the properties of man must be a man, and therefore *three persons* possessed of all the attributes of divinity must be as properly *three Gods*, as three persons possessed of all human attributes must be three men. These three persons, therefore, must be incapable of any strict or numerical *unity*. It must be universally true, that *three things* to which the same definition applies, can never make only *one thing* to which the same definition applies. And when by the words *thing*, *being* or *person*, we mean nothing more than, logically speaking, the *subject*, or *substratum* of *properties* or *attributes*, it is a matter of indifference which of them we make use of.

Each of these three persons may have other properties, but they must be numerically *three* in that respect in which the same definition applies to them. If, therefore, the three persons agree in this circumstance, that they are each of them *perfect God*, though they may differ in other respects, and have peculiar relations to each other, and to us, they must still be *three Gods;* and to say that they are only *one God* is as much a contradiction, as to say that three men, though they differ from one another as much as three men can do, are not three men, but only one man.

If it be said, with the *Antenicene* fathers, and with Bishops Pearson and Bull, among the modern English writers, that the Father is the *fountain of Deity*, and that the Son is derived from him, whether necessarily or voluntarily, whether in time or from eternity, they cannot be of the same *rank;* but the Father will be possessed of an original, a real, and proper superiority to the Son; who will be no more than an *effect*, upon the Father's exertion of his powers, which is, to all intents and purposes, making the Son to be a *production* or *creature* of the Father; even though it should be supposed with the ancients that he was created out of the substance of the Father, and without taking any thing from him. Moreover, as upon this scheme the Son was never capable of giving birth to another person like himself, he must have been originally inferior in power to the Father, the source from which he himself sprang. On this scheme, therefore, there is no proper *equality* between these divine persons; and the *Antenicene* fathers did not pretend that there was, but distinguished the Father by the epithet of Αυτοθεος, *God of himself*, and the Son by the inferior title of Θεος εκ Θεε, *God of God*, or a derived God.

If it be said that there is only one Intelligent Supreme Mind, but that it exerts itself three different ways, and has three different modes of action or operation, (which was the opinion of Dr. Wallis, and that which was generally ascribed to the ancient *Sabellians,*) with respect to one of which the same divine Being was called the Father, to another the Son, and another the Holy Spirit; there is no proper

Trinity at all. For on the same principle one man, bearing three different offices, or having three different relations or capacities, as those of magistrate, father, son, &c., would be three different men.

Some represent themselves as believing the doctrine of the Trinity by asserting with Dr. Doddridge, that "God is so *united* to the derived nature of Christ, and does so *dwell* in it, that, by virtue of that *union*, Christ may be properly called God, and such regards become due to him, as are not due to any *created* nature, or mere creature, be it in itself ever so excellent."*

What this *union* is, in consequence of which any creature can be entitled to the attributes and honours of his Creator, is not pretended to be explained; but as we cannot possibly have any idea of an union between God and a creature, besides that of God being present with that creature, and acting by him, which is the same thing that is asserted by the *Arians* or *Socinians*, these nominal *Trinitarians* must necessarily belong to one or other of these two classes. This is so evident, that it is hardly possible not to suppose but that they must have been much assisted at least in deceiving themselves into a belief that they were *Trinitarians*, by the influence which a dread of the odium and other inconveniences attending the *Arian* or *Socinian* doctrine had on their minds. The presence of God the Father with any creature, whether it be called an union with him, or it be expressed in any other manner whatever, can be nothing more than the *unity of the Father* in that creature; and whatever it be that God voluntarily imparts, he may withdraw again at pleasure. And what kind of divinity must that be, which is dependent upon the will of another?

Upon none of the modifications, therefore, which have been mentioned, (and all others may be reduced to these,) can the doctrine of the Trinity, or of three divine persons in one God, be supported. In most of them the doctrine itself is lost, and where it remains, it is inconsistent with reason and common sense.

II. Arguments from Reason against the Arian Hypothesis.

The *Arian* doctrine, of the world having been made and governed not by the Supreme God himself, but by Christ, the Son of God, though no contradiction in itself, is, on several accounts, highly improbable.

Our reasoning from effects to causes carries us no farther than to the immediate Creator of the visible universe: for if we can suppose that Being to have had a cause or author, we may suppose that his cause or author had a higher cause, and so on *ad infinitum*. According to the light of nature, therefore, the immediate cause or author of the visible universe is the self-existent First Cause, and not any being acting under him, as his instrument. However, the scheme itself is not naturally impossible, since a being possessed of power sufficient to produce the visible universe, which is a limited production, may be *finite*, and therefore may derive his

* See his Lectures, 1763, Proposition 128, p. 392. (*P.*)

power and his being from one who is superior to him. But though the *Arian* scheme cannot be said to be in itself impossible, it is, on several accounts, extremely improbable *à priori*, and therefore ought not to be admitted without very strong and clear evidence.

If this great derived Being, the supposed maker and governor of the world, was united to a human body, he must either have retained and have exercised his extraordinary powers during this union, or have been divested of them; and either supposition has its peculiar difficulties and improbabilities.

If this great Being retained his proper powers during this union, he must have been sustaining the whole universe, and superintending all the laws of nature, while he was an infant at the breast of his mother, and while he hung upon the cross. And to imagine the Creator of the world to have been in those circumstances, is an idea at which the mind revolts, almost as much as at that of the Supreme God himself being reduced to them.

Besides, if Christ retained and exercised all his former powers in this state of apparent humiliation, he must have wrought all his miracles by a power properly *his own*, a power naturally *belonging to him*, as much as the power of speaking and walking belongs to any other man. But this was expressly disclaimed by our Saviour, when he said, that *of himself he could do nothing*, and that it was *the Father within him who did the works*. Also, on this supposition, it must have been this super-angelic being, united to the body of Jesus, that raised him from the dead; whereas this is an effect which is always ascribed to God the Father only.

If, on the other hand, Christ was divested of his original powers, or *emptied himself* of them upon his incarnation, the whole system of the government of the universe must have been changed during his residence upon earth. Either some other derived being, (which this scheme does not provide) must have taken his place, or the Supreme Being himself must have condescended to do that which the scheme supposes there was an impropriety in his doing. For, certainly, the making and the governing of the world would not have been delegated to another, if there had not been some good reason in the nature of things (though it be unknown to us, and may be undiscoverable by us) why the world should have been made and governed by a derived being, and not by the Supreme Being himself. And this reason, whatever it was, must, as far as we can judge, have operated during the time that Christ was upon the earth, as well as before.

If Christ was degraded to the state of a mere man during his humiliation on earth, reason will ask, why might not a mere man have been sufficient; since, notwithstanding his original powers, nothing was, in fact, done by him more than any other man, aided and assisted by God as he was, might have been equal to?

If we consider the object of Christ's mission, and the beings whom it respected, viz. *the race of man*, we cannot but think that there must have been a greater propriety and use in the appointment of a mere man to that office. What occasion was there for any being superior to man for the purpose of communicating the

will of God to man? And as an example of a resurrection to an immortal life, (to enforce which was the great object of his mission,) the death and resurrection of one who was properly and simply a man was certainly far better adapted to give men satisfaction concerning their own future resurrection, than the seeming death (for it could be nothing more) of such a Being as the maker of the world, and the resurrection of a body to which he had been united. For, as he was a being of so much higher rank, it might be said, that the laws of his nature might be very different from those of ours; and therefore he might have privileges to which we could not pretend, and to which we ought not to aspire.

If the world was created and governed by a derived being, this being, on whom we immediately depended, would be that to whom all men would naturally look. He would necessarily become the object of their prayers, in consequence of which the Supreme Being would be overlooked, and become a mere cypher in the universe.

As modern philosophy supposes that there are innumerable worlds inhabited by rational and imperfect beings, (for all *creatures* must be finite and imperfect,) besides this of ours, it cannot be supposed but that many of them must have stood in as much need of the interposition of the Maker of the universe as we have done. And can we suppose either that this should be the only spot in the universe so highly distinguished, or that the maker of it should undergo as many degradations as this scheme may require?

The doctrine of Christ's *pre-existence* goes upon the idea of the possibility, at least, of the pre-existence of other men, and supposes an immaterial soul in man, altogether independent of the body; so that it must have been capable of thinking and acting before his birth, as well as it will be after his death. But these are suppositions which no appearance in nature favours.

The *Arian* hypothesis, therefore, though it implies no proper contradiction, is, on several accounts, highly improbable *à priori*, and therefore ought not to be admitted without very clear and strong evidence.

III. Arguments against the Trinitarian and the Arian Hypothesis from the Scriptures.

I shall now shew, in as concise a manner as I can, that the doctrine of the *Trinity*, and also the *Arian* hypothesis, have as little countenance from the Scriptures as they have from reason. The Scriptures teach us that there is but one God, who is himself the maker and the governor of all things; that this one God is the sole object of worship, and that he sent Jesus Christ to instruct mankind, empowered him to work miracles, raised him from the dead, and gave him all the power that he ever was, or is now possessed of.

1. The Scriptures contain the clearest and most express declarations, that there is but *one God*, without ever mentioning any exception in favour of a *Trinity*, or guarding us against being led into any mistake by such general and unlimited expressions. *Exod.* xx. 3: "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me." *Deut.* vi. 4: "Hear,

O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." *Mark* xii. 29: "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." 1 *Cor.* viii. 6: "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." *Eph.* iv. 5, 6: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." 1 *Tim.* ii. 5: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

On the other hand, not only does the word *Trinity* never occur in the Scriptures, but it is no where said that there are *three persons in this one God:* nor is the doctrine explicitly laid down in any other direct proposition whatever. Christ indeed says, (*John* x. 30,) "I and my Father are one;" but he sufficiently explains himself, by praying that his disciples might be one with him in the same sense in which he was one with the Father. *John* xvii. 21, 22: "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us;—and the glory which thou gavest to me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one."

2. This one God is said to have created all things; and no intimation is given of his having employed any *inferior agent* or *instrument* in the work of creation. *Gen.* i. 1: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."—*Ver.* 3: "God said, Let there be light, and there was light," &c. *Psalm* xxxiii. 6: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."—*Ver.* 9: "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." *Isaiah* xliv. 24: "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself."

3. This one God is called *the Father*, that is, the author of all beings; and he is called God and Father with respect to Christ, as well as all other persons. *John* vi. 27: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed." xvii. 3: "That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." xx. 17: "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." *Eph.* i. 17: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." *Col.* i. 3: "We give thanks to God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

4. Christ is said expressly to be inferior to the Father, all his power is said to have been given him by the Father, and he could do nothing without the Father. *John* xiv. 28: "My Father is greater than I." 1 *Cor.* iii. 23: "Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." xi. 3: "The head of Christ is God." *John* v. 19: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself." xiv. 10: "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father, that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." *Matt.* xxviii. 18: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." 2 *Peter* i. 17:

"He received from God the Father honour and glory." *Rev.* i. 1: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him."

It is now alleged that Christ did not mean that he was inferior to the Father with respect to his *divine nature*, but only with respect to his *human nature*. But if such liberties be taken in explaining a person's meaning, language has no use whatever. On the same principles, it might be asserted that Christ never died, or that he never rose from the dead, secretly meaning his divine nature only. There is no kind of imposition but what might be authorized by such an abuse of language as this.

5. Some things were withheld from Christ by his Father. *Mark* xiii. 32: "But of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man; no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." *Matt.* xx. 23: "To sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

6. As all the dominion that Christ has was derived from the Father, so it is subordinate to that of the Father. 1 *Cor.* xv. 24—28: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

7. Christ always prayed to the Father, and with as much humility and resignation as any man, or the most dependent being in the universe, could possibly do. Our Lord's whole history is a proof of this; but especially the scene of his agony in the garden. *Matt.* xxvi. 37—39: And he "began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death, tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

8. Christ is not only styled *a man* even after his resurrection, but the reasoning of the apostles, in some of the passages where he is spoken of, requires that he should be considered as a man with respect to *his nature*, and not in *name* only, as their reasoning has no force but upon that supposition. *Acts* ii. 22: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God,—by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you." *Heb.* ii. 17: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren." ii. 10: "It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." 1 *Cor.* xv. 21: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead: for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

9. Whatever exaltation Christ now enjoys, it is the gift of his Father, and the reward of his obedience unto death. *Phil.* ii. 8, 9: "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." *Heb.* ii. 9: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." xii. 2: "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Let it also be considered, that no *use* whatever is made of the doctrine of the incarnation of the Maker of the world, in all the *New Testament*. We are neither informed why so extraordinary a measure was necessary for the salvation of men, nor that it *was* necessary. All that can be pretended is, that it is *alluded to* in certain expressions. But certainly it might have been expected that a measure of this magnitude should have been expressly declared, if not clearly explained; that mankind might have no doubt what great things had been done for them; and that they might respect their great Deliverer, as his nature and his proper rank in the creation required.

The author of *the Epistle to the Hebrews* evidently considered Christ as a being of a different rank from that of angels; and the reason why he says that he *ought* to be so, is, that he might have a feeling of our infirmities. But, certainly, we shall be more easily satisfied that any person really *felt* as a man, if he was truly a man, and nothing more than a man; than if he was a superior being (and especially a being so far superior to us as the Maker of the world must have been,) degraded to the condition of a man; because, if he had any recollection of his former state, the idea of that must have borne him up under his difficulties and sufferings, in such a manner as no mere man could have been supported: and it is supposed by the *Arians* that *Christ had* a knowledge of his prior state, for they suppose him to have referred to it in his prayer to the Father for *the glory which he had with him before the world was*; and yet this is hardly consistent with the account that *Luke* gives of his *increasing in wisdom*.

No person, I think, can, with an unprejudiced mind, attend to these considerations, and the texts of scripture above recited, (which are perfectly agreeable to the tenor of the whole,) and imagine that it was the intention of the sacred writers to represent Christ either as the Supreme God, or as the maker of the world under God.

There is another *hypothesis*, of some modern *Arians*, which represents Christ as having pre-existed, but not as having been the creator or governor of the world, or the medium of all the dispensations of God to mankind. But those texts of scripture which seem to be most express in favour of Christ's pre-existence do likewise, by the same mode of interpretation, represent him as the maker of the world; so that if the favourers of this hypothesis can suppose the language of these texts to be figurative, they may more easily sup-

pose the other to be figurative also; and that whatever obscurity there may be in them, they were not intended to refer to any pre-existence at all.

The passages of scripture which are supposed to speak of Christ as the maker of the world are the following, viz. *John* i. 3, *Eph.* iii. 9, *Col.* i. 15, *Heb.* i. 1, &c. These, I will venture to say, are the texts that most strongly favour the notion of Christ's pre-existence, and no person can doubt but that, if they must be interpreted to assert that Christ pre-existed at all, they, with the same clearness, assert that he was the maker of the world. But if these texts admit of a figurative interpretation, all the other texts, which are supposed to refer to the *pre-existence only*, will more easily admit of a similar construction. These two opinions, therefore, viz. that Christ pre-existed, and that he was the maker of the world, ought, by all means, to stand or fall together, and if any person think the latter to be improbable, and contrary to the plain tenor of the Scriptures, (which uniformly represent the Supreme Being himself, without the aid of any inferior agent, or instrument, as the maker of the universe,) he should abandon the doctrine of simple pre-existence also.

In what manner the proper *Unitarians* interpret these passages of scripture may be seen in my "Familiar Illustration of certain Passages of Scripture,"* in several of the *Socinian Tracts*, in three volumes quarto,† and especially in Mr. Lindsey's *Sequel to his Apology*,‡ to which I refer my readers for a farther discussion of this subject.

It is only of late years, that any persons have pretended to separate the two opinions of Christ's pre-existence, and of his being the maker of the world. All the ancient Arians maintained both, as did Dr. Clarke, Mr. Whiston, Mr. Emlyn, Mr. Peirce, and their followers; and I do not know that any other hypothesis has appeared in *writing*, except that it is alluded to in the *Theological Repository*.

No. VIII.

THE DIFFERENT OPINIONS OF Dr. HORSLEY AND Dr. PRIESTLEY, BRIEFLY STATED.

(See *supra*, p. 153.)

That my readers may more easily form a clear and comprehensive idea of the *nature* and *extent* of this controversy, I shall, in this place, briefly state the principal articles on which Dr. Horsley and myself hold different opinions.

1. Dr. Horsley insists upon it, that the faith of the primitive Christian church must have been *Trinitarian*, because that doctrine appears in the writings of *Barnabas* and *Ignatius*. I say that,

* See Vol. II. pp. 449—472.

† 1691—1695. See Dr. Toulmin's *Hist. View*, pp. 173, 179.

‡ P. 455. (*P.*)

admitting these works to be genuine *in the main*, they bear evident marks of interpolation with respect to this very subject, and therefore the conclusion is not just.

2. Dr. Horsley says, that those who are called *Ebionites*, did not exist in the age of the apostles, and also that, though they believed the simple humanity of Christ, they probably held some mysterious exaltation of his nature after his ascension, which made him the object of prayer to them. I say the Ebionites certainly existed in the time of the apostles, and that this notion of their holding such an exaltation of his nature, as to make him the object of prayer, is highly improbable.

3. Dr. Horsley says, that those who are called *Nazarenes* by the early Christian writers, believed the divinity of Christ, that they did not exist till after the time of *Adrian*, and had their name from the place where they settled in the North of Galilee, after they were then driven from Jerusalem. I maintain, that these *Nazarenes* no more believed the divinity of Christ than the *Ebionites*, and that, together with them, they were supposed, by the Christian fathers, to have existed in the time of the apostles.

4. Dr. Horsley maintains that there was a church of orthodox Jewish Christians at Jerusalem after the time of *Adrian;* for, that the body of Jewish Christians, who had before observed the law of Moses, abandoned their ceremonies after the destruction of the place, in order to obtain the privileges of the *Ælian* colony, settled there by Adrian. Origen, who asserts that the Jewish Christians had not abandoned the laws and customs of their ancestors, Dr. Horsley says must have known the contrary, and therefore asserted a wilful falsehood. I say that Adrian expelled all the Jews, whether Christians or not, from Jerusalem, that the Christian church afterwards settled at Jerusalem consisted wholly of Gentile converts, and that the testimony of *Origen*, agreeably with this, is highly worthy of credit.

5. Dr. Horsley maintains, that though he finds no *Unitarians* in the apostolic age, a censure was intended for them by the apostle John in the phrase *Christ came in the flesh.* I assert, that the Unitarians did exist in great numbers in the time of *John*, but that he did not censure them at all; and that the phrase *Christ came in the flesh*, relates to the *Gnostics* only.

6. Dr. Horsley asserts, that the *Unitarians*, from the time that they made their appearance, were considered as *heretics* by the orthodox Christians, and not admitted to communion with them, and particularly that they were included by *Justin Martyr* among those heretics whom he charges with *blasphemy.* I assert that in *Justin's* time, and much later, the Unitarians were not deemed heretics at all, that Justin did not even allude to Unitarians in either of his two accounts of *heretics in general*, and that the *blasphemy* he speaks of respected the *Gnostics* only.

7. Though *Tertullian* says the *idiotæ*, who were the greater part of Christians, were Unitarians, and shocked at the doctrine of the Trinity, Dr. Horsley asserts that he only meant to include a small number of them in that class, and those so ignorant and stupid as to deserve to be called *idiots.* I maintain that by *idiotæ* he only meant

unlearned persons, or *persons in private life*; and I also maintain that even in *Origen's* time, and long after, a great part of these Christians were Unitarians, and in communion with the Catholic church; that the term *heresy* was long used as synonymous to *Gnosticism*, and that the original use of the term frequently occurs even after the Unitarians were deemed to be heretics.

8. Dr. Horsley maintains that by the Jews who held the simple humanity of Christ, *Athanasius* meant the unbelieving Jews only, and that the Gentiles who were by them converted to that belief, were unbelieving Gentiles. I say the Jews were Christian Jews, and their converts Christian Gentiles.

9. Dr. Horsley maintains that the Jews in our Saviour's time, believed in the doctrine of the Trinity, that they expected the second Person in the Trinity as their *Messiah*, and that they changed their opinion concerning him when the Christians applied it to Christ. I say that the Jews were always Unitarians, that they expected only a man for their *Messiah*, and that they never changed their opinion on that subject.

10. Dr. Horsley says that the apostles considered Christ as being *God* from the time that they considered him as the *Messiah*. I say that they considered him as *a mere man*, when they received him as the *Messiah*, and that we find no evidence in their history, or in their writings, that they ever changed that opinion concerning him.

11. Dr. Horsley denies that the orthodox fathers before the Council of *Nice*, held that the logos had been an attribute of the Deity, and then assumed a proper personality; and says that all that they meant by the *generation of the Son*, was the *display of his powers* in the production of material beings. I assert, that by this *generation*, they certainly meant a *change of state* in the *logos*, viz. from a mere *attribute*, such as *reason* is in man, to a *proper person*, and that in their opinion this was made with a view to the creation of the world.

12. Dr. Horsley can find no difference between this doctrine of the personification of the *Logos*, and the peculiar opinions of the *Arians*. I assert that they were two schemes directly opposed to each other, and so clearly defined, as never to have been confounded or mistaken.

13. Dr. Horsley asserts, that it seems to have been the opinion of all the fathers, and is likewise agreeable to the Scriptures, that the second Person in the Trinity had his origin from the first Person contemplating his own perfections. I challenge him to produce any authority whatever, ancient or modern, for that opinion.

14. Dr. Horsley maintains that, though the three Persons in the Trinity have each of them all the perfections of Deity, the Father is the fountain of the divinity, and has some unknown pre-eminence. I assert that this pre-eminence is inconsistent with the proper *equality*, and that if they be properly equal, they must necessarily be three Gods as well as three Persons.

15. Dr. Horsley says, that prayer for succour in external persecution, seems with particular propriety to be addressed to the Son. I say that this is altogether a distinction of his own, and has no

countenance in scripture precept or example, nor, indeed, in those of the primitive church.

16. Dr. Horsley maintains that the *Unitarians* do not even pretend that the general tenor of scripture is in their favour, that they cannot produce any text that plainly contains their doctrine, but that they derive it wholly from particular passages, to which they give a figurative interpretation. Whereas I maintain, that the Unitarians have always appealed to the general tenor of scripture, and the plain language of it; and, on the contrary, that the *Trinitarians* cannot find *their* doctrine either in the general tenor, or in any clear texts of scripture, but that they deduce it from particular expressions and circumstances, which, when rightly explained, do by no means authorize their conclusions.

17. Dr. Horsley says, that the difference between the *Unitarians* and the *Mahometans* is so small, and such advances were made towards the Mahometans by the Unitarians of the last age, that there is good ground to think that the Unitarians will soon acknowledge the divine mission of *Mahomet*. He also represents Christianity on the principles of *Unitarianism*, as inferior to *Deism*, and when joined with *Materialism*, as highly favourable to *Atheism*: Such charges as these, I say, can proceed from nothing but ignorance and malevolence, and do not deserve a serious refutation.

These are all the articles of importance on which we hold different opinions, every thing else being of less moment, and subordinate to these.

No. IX.

ADDITIONS TO LETTERS TO Dr. HORSLEY, PART II., LETTER IX.

(See *supra*, p. 200.)

Admitting that the apostles had taught any doctrines of a peculiarly sublime nature, and above the comprehension of ordinary Christians; yet, as all their teaching was in public, and there were no *secrets* among them, nothing corresponding to the *mysteries* of the Heathens, the common people must have heard of these sublime things, and have been accustomed to the sound of the language in which they were expressed; and they would have learned to respect what they could not understand. They could never have been *offended* and *staggered* at things which they and their fathers before them had always been in the hearing of.

Besides this argument for the novelty of the doctrine of the *Trinity*, from the *offence* that was given by it in the time of *Tertullian*, when, as far as I can find, the common people first heard of it; that this class of persons were generally *Unitarians* before, and even after the Council of *Nice*, appears pretty clearly from several circumstances in the history of those times. Besides, that we do not read of any of the *laity* being excommunicated along with *Noetus*, *Paul of Samosata*, or *Photinus*, though Unitarians are acknowledged to have been in great numbers in their days, and to have been in communion with the Catholic church. When the two last were deposed

from their sees, the common people were their friends. After the bishops had deposed *Paul of Samosata*, he could not be expelled from the episcopal house till the aid of the emperor *Aurelian* was called in, and he may be supposed to have been offended at him, for his having been in the interest of his rival *Zenobia*.* This could not have been necessary, if the majority of his people had not been with him, and, therefore, if his deposition had not, in fact, been unjust.

As to *Photinus*, he was so popular in his diocese, that his solemn deposition by three councils could not remove him from his see. "He defended himself," says *Tillemont*, "against the authority of the church, by the affection which his people had for him, even to the year 351; though his heresy began to appear as early as 342 or 343, according to Socrates; and the Eusebians condemned it in one of their confessions of faith in 345."† At length, the emperor *Constantius*, a zealous *Arian*, thought it necessary to interfere, and get him banished in a council held at *Sirmium* itself. I may add, that *Marcellus of Ancyra* left Galatia full of Unitarians, as *Basil* afterwards found to his cost. Had the body of Christians in those times been generally Trinitarians, we Dissenters, who are pretty much in the same situation with Unitarians in those times, not having the countenance of government, know well how ready the common people would have been to take an active part in those affairs.

"Sabellianism," which was precisely the same thing with *Unitarianism* in former times, Dr. Lardner says, "must have been very agreeable to the apprehensions of many people. Eusebius speaks of its increasing very much in Egypt, when Dionysius of Alexandria opposed it. According to Athanasius, the occasion of Dionysius's writing upon that head was, that some bishops of Africa followed the doctrine of Sabellius, and they prevailed to such a degree, that the Son of God was scarce any longer preached in the churches."‡

It is also remarkable, that the first treatise that was ever written against the Unitarian doctrine was that of *Tertullian* against *Praxeas*, with whom he was particularly provoked, on account of the active part he had taken against *Montanus*, in getting him excommunicated and expelled from the church of Rome. This, says *Le Sueur*, was the cause of the bitterness with which *Tertullian* wrote against him. Now there were treatises against the *Gnostics* in a much earlier period. Why, then, were none written against the Unitarians, since pure Unitarianism was certainly as old as *Gnosticism?* And if it had been deemed a *heresy* at all, it would certainly have been thought to be of the most alarming nature, as it is considered at present. In the opinions of those who are now called *orthodox*, the *Gnostics* thought much more honourably of Christ than the Unitarians did. The *Unitarians* were likewise much more numerous, and in the bosom of the church itself; a circumstance which might be expected to render them peculiarly obnoxious.

* See Vol. VIII. pp. 201, 202. † History of the Arians, I. p. 116. (*P.*)
‡ *Credib.* IV. p. 606. (*P.*) *Works*, III. p. 77.

No. X.

ADDITIONS TO LETTERS TO Dr. HORSLEY, PART II., LETTER XVII.

(See *supra*, p. 255.)

I OBSERVE that, to the many false charges and insinuations of Dr. Horsley, which are noticed in the preceding Letters, he has added another to exculpate himself for the contempt which he has expressed of Dissenters. "If you are still," he says, "disposed to be indignant about this harmless word," *(conventicle,)* "recollect, I beseech you, with what respect you have yourself treated the venerable body to which I belong, the clergy of the Establishment. You divide it into two classes only, the ignorant and the insincere. Have I no share in this opprobrium of my order? Have I no right to be indignant in my turn?"*

I do not pretend to recollect all that I have written; but I have such a consciousness of never having *meant* or *intended to say* what Dr. Horsley here charges me with, that I will venture to assert, that he cannot have any more authority for this, than for the privileges granted to the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem, on their abandoning the ceremonies of their old religion. That many of the clergy are *ignorant*, none can deny; because it is true of every body of clergy in the world; and that some are *insincere*, may also, without great uncharitableness, be supposed of any large body of men. Of one kind of insincerity, the fact is too evident to be denied of several of the members of the Church of England; for no man can be sincere in professing to believe what he openly writes against. And are there not persons in communion with the Church of England who publicly controvert the articles of it; which articles, while they continue in the church, and especially if they officiate in it, they virtually profess to believe? That many are both learned and sincere, I have acknowledged with respect to the clergy of the Church of Rome, and I think I could hardly say less of those of the Church of England. I shall, therefore, consider this charge of Dr. Horsley as a mere *calumny*, till he shall produce some evidence for it; and if, in any of my writings, he can find sufficient authority for his accusation, I here retract what I advanced, and ask pardon for it.

The *learning* of many divines in the Church of Rome and that of England, I have never denied. Bishop Hurd I have styled *learned* and *able*, though, in my opinion, nothing can be weaker than his reasoning on the subject of church establishments. As to *sincerity*, I have always been ready to acknowledge it with respect to both the churches. As one proof of this, I shall quote a passage from the *Sermon* I preached *on accepting the pastoral office* in this place: [*Birmingham:*] "Think not that the most fervent zeal for what are apprehended to be the genuine doctrines of the gospel, is at all inconsistent with true *Christian charity*, which always judges of particular persons according to the advantages they have enjoyed,

* *Letters*, p. 172. (*P.*) *Tracts*, p. 294.

and of the final state of men by their *sincerity* only. And, for my own part, I have no doubt but that, though the Church of Rome be the proper *Antichrist* of the apostles, not only innumerable zealous Papists, but even some popes themselves, and since the Reformation, will sit down with *Luther*, with *Calvin*, and with *Socinus*, in the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Known unto God alone are the hearts of men; and the man who honestly pursues truth, and who acts according to the best lights that God gives him an opportunity of acquiring, will be he whom the *God of truth* and uprightness will approve; and none will suffer a greater or more just condemnation than those who *hold the truth in unrighteousness*. Much rather would I be in the case of many worthy persons in the Church of England, or the Church of Rome, who, at the same time that they are fully sensible of the corruptions and errors of the system in which they are entangled, are not able to break their chains, than, from a spirit the reverse of that of the gospel, make an improper use of my own liberty, by insulting them."*

Will Dr. Horsley himself say this after me? With respect to real candour, few, I think, will go greater lengths than I have done. He charges me with many instances of *wilful misrepresentation*, which is certainly a charge of *insincerity;* whereas, I have not charged him with any, though I might have done it with much greater appearance of reason. With respect to *ignorance*, viz. of what relates to the subject of this controversy, with which he likewise repeatedly charges me, I own that I return the accusation, and let our readers judge between us.

No. XI.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PRESENT STATE OF FREE INQUIRY IN THIS COUNTRY.

(See *supra*, p. 304.)

I PUBLISH the preceding Discourse † in part to oblige those before whom it was delivered; but chiefly because I do not think

* See Vol. XV. pp. 42, 43. On this quotation Dr. Horsley remarks, that Dr. Priestley "justifies himself, by producing a long passage from one of his sermons, in which he professes to hold the Church of England in no less estimation than the Church of Rome." *Tracts*, p. 295, *Note*.

† The *Sermon*, Vol. XV. p. 70, to which the *Reflections* were annexed in 1785 and 1787. In 1785 there was the following *Preface* to the Sermon:

"After I had consented to the publication of the following Discourse, it occurred to me that it might be proper to take the same opportunity of enlarging upon some of the topics of it, and of adding such other *Reflections* on the subject as the limits of a sermon would not admit, and also such as were less proper for a mixed audience.

"Having written the *Reflections*, I was desired to attend to some passages in Mr. White's Sermons, which I happened not to have read before; and having animadverted on them, and the pamphlet entitled *Primitive Candour* coming into my hands at the same time, I thought it would not be amiss to give my opinion of that performance, as well as of Mr. Howes's, which I had not been able to procure till

that the generality of even the more liberal-minded Christians in this country have as yet given sufficient attention to the sentiments inculcated in it. This I perceive by the alarm that has been taken at some free, but important discussions in the last volume of the *Theological Repository*.* It was a willingness to convince such persons how groundless were the apprehensions they have expressed on this subject, that led me to the train of thought which runs through this Discourse; though it will be perceived that I had likewise a view to another class of persons, who despise all such discussions as those which I now allude to.

It has been too much the disposition of all Christians to imagine that those who think a little more freely than themselves, are ready to abandon Christianity itself, together with their peculiar notions concerning it. They are so fully persuaded that their own opinions are contained in the Scriptures, that they cannot separate the idea of renouncing the one from that of renouncing the other. But a little observation and reflection on what has passed of a similar nature, might satisfy them that their apprehensions have no solid foundation; their own peculiar notions not having, in reality, that necessary connexion with Christianity which they imagine them to have, from not considering how few the essentials of Christianity are.

From want of distinguishing essentials from non-essentials, the *Roman Catholics* have thought that there can be no Christianity besides their own; and too many of the several sects of *Protestants* think the same with respect to their peculiar tenets. Many *Arians* (themselves held in abhorrence by *Athanasians*) have said that they could not consider *Socinians* as Christians; and some are now unreasonably apprehensive, that those who disbelieve the miraculous conception, or the plenary inspiration of Christ and the apostles, in cases with respect to which the object of their mission did not require inspiration, are in danger of rejecting Christianity, though they are as firm believers in the divine mission of Christ (which alone properly constitutes a Christian) as themselves. This is the more extraordinary, as the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures is, I believe, universally disclaimed by all who are called rational Christians. But of what use is it to give up that doctrine, if we are never to avail ourselves of our opinion with re-

very lately; for though I have written as much in the way of *controversy*, relating to *the doctrine of the Primitive Church concerning Christ*, as will be sufficient to acquit me of any suspicion of a distrust of what I have advanced, yet, as my object is the spread of truth, which cannot be promoted without keeping up an *attention* to it, I thought it might answer a good purpose to urge such men as Mr. White, Mr. Howes, and the anonymous author of the pamphlet above-mentioned, to produce what they may have to say on the subject. If my writings be of no other use, at least *vice cotis fungantur*.

"I cannot conclude this Preface without expressing my surprise, that all my antagonists in this controversy should be *Trinitarians*, and that no *Arian* has appeared in it. It is certainly an unfavourable symptom for them. Where is their learning or their zeal? Solomon says, *there is a time to speak;* but my Arian friends may think that that time is not yet come."

* The *Fourth*, 1784. These *Discussions* were, I apprehend, those by the Author, on *Inspiration* and *on the Miraculous Conception*.

spect to it, and do not thereby find ourselves at liberty to examine with perfect freedom, narratives and reasonings which are confessedly not infallible, and in which, therefore, there may be mistakes. Besides, it is an allowed maxim with us, that the fewer blemishes of any kind we leave in our religion, the greater service we render it. But it is no uncommon thing to admit general *principles*, and yet startle at the natural and necessary *consequences* of them.

I am sensible that the present times are in more respects than one unfavourable to theological discussions. Very many, of whom better things might be expected, are averse to them; thinking them altogether useless, or perhaps dangerous. They are persuaded that their own opinions (which they have adopted without giving themselves much trouble about the matter) are perfectly rational, that the truth of them must be admitted whenever they are fairly proposed to the mind, and that all we have to do is to apply them to their proper practical uses; and to the inculcating of these, they would have all discourses from the pulpit, and from the press too, to be confined.

A great majority of every denomination of Christians have always had this dislike of speculation, and, therefore, it is not at all extraordinary that there should be so great a proportion of them among those who think more rationally than their ancestors, and who, therefore, rank themselves in the class of *rational Christians*. Their opinions are not what they have investigated themselves, but what they have received from others, as much as the *Roman Catholics* have theirs. It may, therefore, be expected that they should be affected in the same manner towards them. Laborious inquirers after truth are but few in any community, nor is there any occasion that they should be numerous. It is only to be wished, that those who take no pains to inquire themselves, would throw no obstacles in the way of him who does, and have the same indulgence for his feelings that he has for theirs.

In another respect also, the times in which we live are unfavourable to free inquiry in matters of religion. We are not, indeed, *persecuted* for our religious principles, and few persons have even much scruple of openly declaring what they think; but the influence of habit, of fashion, and of connexions, in these peaceable times, is such, that few persons, very few indeed, have the courage to *act* agreeably to their principles, so as to rank themselves, and to appear in that class of men to which they really belong. They content themselves, as the Heathen philosophers did, with *thinking with the wise, and acting with the vulgar*; a conduct certainly unworthy of a Christian, who ought to sacrifice every thing to *truth* and *consistency of character*. There is this good, however, arises from the evil, that such persons allow themselves more liberty in speculation than they probably would do, if they thought themselves bound in conscience to do what I should call acting agreeably to their principles; and by this means the foundation is gradually laying for a future change in the more public aspect of things.

The converts that are daily made to the Unitarian doctrine, and who for the present continue members of Trinitarian churches, may

in time be sensible of the obligation they are under to withdraw themselves from that mode of worship; or if not, they will always be ready to join their influence to forward any attempts that may be made towards a farther reformation. And when the generality of those who really read and think, shall become Unitarians, (and those who do not read or think for themselves, are sure to follow their leaders, and of course join every majority,) a small change in the political state of things in a country, such as no man can foresee before it actually takes place, and which may be at no great distance, may suffice to overturn the best-compacted establishments *at once*, before the bigotted friends of them suspect any danger. And thus the system which had stood for ages, without any visible marks of ruin or decay, may vanish, like an enchanted castle in romance. For then men, whose minds were already emancipated, will in a moment find themselves at liberty in all respects, without any motive whatever to engage them to give their support to error and superstition. Circumstances may even arise in which the most indifferent may feel themselves inspired with courage, and become warm advocates for those principles which they now hold in perfect silence, hardly speaking of them to their nearest friends. How many are there already *speaking out*, who some time ago were almost afraid to *think!*

Let us not, therefore, be discouraged, though for the present we should see no great number of churches professedly Unitarian. It is sufficiently evident that Unitarian principles are gaining ground every day. Every attempt to suppress them by writing or otherwise, has hitherto been favourable to their spread, and we may be confident it ever will be so. We are now sowing the seeds which the cold of winter may prevent from sprouting, but which a genial spring will make to shoot and grow up; so that the field which to-day appears perfectly naked and barren, may to-morrow be all green, and promise an abundant harvest. The present silent propagation of truth may even be compared to those causes in nature which lie dormant for a time, but which, in proper circumstances, act with the greatest violence. We are, as it were, laying gunpowder, grain by grain, under the old building of error and superstition, which a single spark may hereafter inflame so as to produce an instantaneous explosion; in consequence of which, that edifice, the erection of which has been the work of ages, may be overturned in a moment, and so effectually as that the same foundation can never be built upon again.*

* I was present, March 28, 1787, when Dr. Priestley, as he relates in the Preface to *Familiar Letters*, heard "Sir William Dolben read this paragraph in the House of Commons, with great solemnity," on Mr. Beaufoy's first motion for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. The worthy Baronet, I well recollect, dispensed the *gunpowder* with a deliberation, awfully impressive, *grain by grain*. Mr. Courtenay, who had often relieved the *tedium* of a debate, now assured this alarmed representative of *Oxford University*, that his *Church* had nothing to fear, as it was only "the old building of error and superstition" which was in any danger.

Dr. Geddes, in 1790, published his *Epistola Macaronica ad Fratrem*, a burlesque poem, occasioned by some incidents which had lately occurred at a public dinner of the Dissenters, at which Dr. Priestley was not present. In the following lines,

If we be successful in the propagation of truth, we need not give ourselves any concern about the measures of government respecting it. This is equally out of our province and unnecessary. Causes will always produce their effects; and though the cases be of a different nature, it is as certain an inference as any in *geometry*, that an *Unitarian* people cannot long be subject to a *Trinitarian* establishment. Indeed, no motive can be imagined why any civil governors (supposing it to be in their power) should not allow the people the open profession of the religion they really choose, and are willing to support. Things are already in such a train that, though no person can foresee the particular time and manner of the change in favour of *Unitarianism*, we may be as certain of its taking place as if we saw it actually accomplished. And till things are properly ripe for such a revolution, it would be absurd to expect it, and in vain to attempt it.

When a competent number of the more intelligent persons in all parts of the Roman empire were either declared Christians, or so well disposed towards a change as not to be sorry for it, the conversion of an emperor was sufficient to establish Christianity, without any alarming opposition. The conversion of *Tiberius*, of *Vespasian*, of *Marcus Antoninus*, or any other emperor in an earlier period would not have done it. But when an *internal revolution* had been previously made in favour of Christianity, though *Constantine* should not have been converted, the *external revolution* could not have been delayed much longer. It would certainly have taken place, whether any particular emperor had favoured it or not.

In like manner, when the minds of a proper number of persons were enlightened with respect to the grosser errors of Popery, the boldness of *Luther* and a few others, roused by the impudence of the venders of indulgences, was sufficient to produce what has been called *the Reformation*. Ten *Luthers*, in an earlier period, would only have supplied so many victims for the Inquisition; and though no Luther should have appeared at the beginning of the sixteenth century, things were then in such a state, that, by some other means, a similar revolution in favour of religious liberty would, no doubt, have taken place.

It has been well observed by philosophical historians, that if the loss of a single battle decide the fate of an empire, there must have been a previous reason, in the general state of things, why so much should depend on the event of a single battle; and that, in a different state of things, the loss of many battles would not have overturned the state.

"the grains of gunpowder," says Mr. Good, "which excited so much idle inflammability and uproar among the High-church party, are introduced with much dexterity and effect:

> "Non aderas, Priestley! potior te cura tenebat
> Rure, ubi magna inter centum miracula rerum,
> Horslæi caput in rutilantia fulmina forgis;
> *Sulphuris et satagis subtilia grana* parare,
> *Church quibus et churchmen in cœlum upblowere* possis."
>
> *Mem. of Geddes*, pp. 258, 259.

It is our business, therefore, by conversation, by preaching, and by writing, to get access to the minds of those who are disposed to think; and without giving ourselves any trouble about the conduct of government, to employ ourselves simply in the propagation of truth. Here is a great and glorious field fully open to our utmost exertions, and requiring them. And while we are successful in these labours, (and the success is visible every day,) though we should not live to see any favourable change in the face of public affairs, we may die in as firm a faith of its taking place, as Joseph did of his countrymen inhabiting the promised land, when he ordered that he should not be buried, but that his body should only be embalmed, and put into a coffin in Egypt, ready to be carried away when they should leave that country.

The most equitable thing in the governors of any country would, no doubt, be to allow *Unitarians*, or any other description of men, the use of a church, or any other public building in a town, in which they should be so numerous as to occupy one, and when their proportion of the tithes, &c. would be sufficient for the maintenance of a minister of their persuasion; and no sort of inconvenience would arise to the state from such a measure as this. This was done in several places in *Germany*, at the time of the Reformation. But in the present state of things, it is in vain to expect any such equitable conduct. We may now, however, besides *deserving* it, be doing that which shall ensure such an event at a future time, when it shall be sufficiently understood that *Unitarians* are quite as good subjects as *Trinitarians*, and, therefore, that there has been no good reason why the latter should so long have enjoyed their present exclusive advantages. How the belief of a mysterious doctrine operates to the prosperity and security of the state, is a problem not very easy to solve.

At *Boston*, in *New England*, (a country in which no man was taxed towards the support of any religion that he did not approve,* and which never flourished the less on that account,) there were three episcopal churches; and had the English government continued there, the *English Liturgy*, in its present state, would, no doubt have continued to be used in them all.† But the principal of them has now adopted an *Unitarian* form of worship,‡ and the same will probably be done in other provinces of the *United States*.§ Was there equal liberty in this country, (which may take place by means as unforeseen by us as the Revolution in *America*,) there are few considerable towns in which the people (voting freely, and all the complex influence of the present establishment out of the question) would not have at least one *Unitarian* church. And if one would be wanted now, there will, I am confident, be a demand

* See Vol. VIII. p. 6, *Note*.

† The Episcopalians in America have, I believe, now generally adopted an English Liturgy, reformed according to the plan suggested in the *Candid Disquisitions*, 1749, omitting the *Athanasian Creed*, and reducing the number of articles. See Lindsey's *Vind. Priestl.*, pp. 19—26; *Mon. Repos.* XIV. pp. 407, 408.

‡ See *Mem. of Lindsey*, p. 238.

§ See the accomplishment of this expectation, related in various articles in the latter volumes of the *Mon. Repos.*

for two, twenty years hence. This may be said with tolerable certainty, from the consideration of the increase of Unitarians in the last fifty years, the greater still in proportion in the last twenty, and the greatest of all in the last ten years. What, then, may we not reasonably expect from the train in which things now are?

The efforts of man to stop what they may call the mischief, would be like the attempt to stop a rivulet supplied by a constant spring, however small. Nothing could be easier than to make a dam that would be sufficient for the purpose at first; but as the water keeps rising, the dam must be made higher and stronger, and (the effort of the water to burst its way continually increasing) the highest and strongest must necessarily fail some time or other, and the deluge, which would be the consequence, would be in proportion to the time in which it had been confined. Truth has never yet been conquered by power, numerous as have been the attempts of the latter to bear it down.

It may be said, that since there has been an increase of *Unbelievers*, as well as of *Unitarians*, in the last century, it may, on these principles, be predicted that *they* will continue to increase to the extirpation of Christians of all denominations. This reasoning, I own, would have been just, if men had become *Unbelievers*, as well as *Unitarians*, from reading and thinking. But there is in this respect a most essential difference in the two cases. Of the unbelievers of this age (I speak from the fullest persuasion) few, indeed, are so, from that serious inquiry and real conviction, to which alone the spread of Unitarianism can be ascribed. The rejection of Christianity may be accounted for from many causes besides a serious conviction of its fallacy; but no other cause can reasonably be assigned why a Trinitarian should become an Unitarian; as the obligations of moral virtue are not relaxed by the change, and the allurements of honour and profit are on the side of the established faith.

It is evident to those who converse with *Unbelievers*, that few of them are qualified to discuss the evidences of Christianity, a proof that they have not rejected it from any deficiency that they found in its proof; whereas there are great numbers of *Unitarians* who can readily give the reasons of their faith, which shews that they have really considered and weighed the subject.

It is also to be observed, that a great increase of *Unbelievers* has been owing to the corruptions of Christianity; and this cause ceasing, in part by the efforts of Unitarians, the effects will in due time cease of course. Christianity and its evidences are exhibited in such a light at present, that fewer philosophical persons, giving due attention to the subject (which is the great thing that is wanting, but which many circumstances may excite) will be able to withhold their assent to it.

Others will object to the conclusiveness of this reasoning to prove the future universality of Unitarianism, the rapid spread and long continuance of *Mahometanism* in the world. But the grounds and principles of that religion underwent no very severe discussion at the time of its promulgation, or early propagation. The professors of it wrote little in its defence, and there never was an age in which the Mahometan and Christian *literati* had so free and equal an inter-

course as to give room for much controversy. Whenever that shall take place, and the common people be in a capacity of reading and judging for themselves, less than a century, I am persuaded, will be sufficient fully to establish the credit of the one system, and to destroy that of the other. Which of the two must yield in the contest, I, who am a Christian, cannot have a doubt.

On the contrary, Christianity, from the earliest period, was eagerly attacked and defended, the common people gave great attention to the controversy, and it was the manifest superiority of the Christian apologists, in point of argument, that decided between them.

The same observations will apply to the reformation from Popery; and had not the civil powers intervened, there can be no doubt but that an end would soon have been put to the authority of the Church of Rome, and the chief corruptions of it. Had the reading of *Protestant* books only been allowed in *Popish* countries, the Reformation would have kept advancing, notwithstanding all the opposition from the civil powers.

The controversy between the *Unitarians* and *Trinitarians* has been open many years, much has been written on both sides, the common people are become parties, and civil government does not directly interfere. In these circumstances, it is a fact which no person can deny, that a great number of the common people, with a much greater proportion of men of learning, are become Unitarians; and this has been the case so long, that there can be no doubt of its continuance.

The effect of free discussion is to produce a number of persons capable of writing in defence of their principles. *Unbelievers* really qualified to write upon the subject are very few, compared with learned Christians. It is no less evident that learned *Unitarians* increase, while learned *Trinitarians* decrease. These facts are sufficient to enable any person, without making himself master of the respective arguments, to conclude that Unitarian Christians will continue to increase, to the extermination of Unbelievers on the one hand, and Trinitarians on the other. The interference of the civil powers, and the influence of splendid establishments, may retard this event, but will not be able to prevent it.

Some may smile at this method of calculating and predicting events. But moral causes are as uniform and certain in their operation as natural ones, and when the *data* are equally clear, the *principles* will authorize equally sure conclusions.

If a man of common sense only, without any knowledge of philosophy, were told that the *Newtonian* system of the universe, after having been canvassed by philosophers of all nations, had, notwithstanding great opposition, been gradually gaining ground for the space of more than half a century, he would not doubt the universality of its reception in time. Having similar *data*, I think we may venture to predict the universal prevalence of Unitarianism in a future period.

If the controversy between the *Arians* and the *Socinians* should be kept up ten or twenty years longer, and in all that time the Socinians should continue to increase, as they have done during the last ten years, few persons will be backward to prognosticate that

Arianism also will finally and even soon be exterminated, especially as it has not the support of the civil powers.

The *principles* on which I argue will hardly be contested; but persons, according as they are disposed with respect to particular controversies, will see the *facts* relating to them in different lights. What I say of the uniform spread of Unitarian principles may possibly be denied by some Trinitarians, but it is allowed by Unitarians. To them, therefore, it holds out a sure prospect of a final triumph over all their adversaries, and it is for their encouragement that I make these observations.

To write in this manner may be said to be imprudent, as it is giving an alarm to those who now apprehend no danger, and therefore make no efforts to prevent it. But the friends of free inquiry and truth may rest satisfied, that, as every effort which has hitherto been made to bear down the cause for which they contend has, in reality, served to promote it, so also will every future effort that can be made for the same purpose. The cause of truth may be compared to an engine constructed so as to be put in motion by the tide, and which is kept in its proper movement, whether the water flow in or flow out. Nothing here is wanting but *motion*, it being impossible for that motion, from whatever quarter it arise, to operate unfavourably.

The best worldly policy, in the enemies of truth, is, no doubt, that of those who endeavour to stifle all inquiry, who read nothing, and who reply to nothing. But even this will do but little, while the friends of truth are zealous and active in its interests; as by this means they have the advantage, in the eye of the world, of being known to invite and provoke discussion; being seen to walk over the field of controversy without an adversary; though it would certainly be more desirable still to have a respectable opponent.

As to this country, we may be confident that, while error and superstition are falling every where abroad, they can never really gain ground here. We have in a great measure set the example of free inquiry, and have taken the lead in religious liberty to other nations; and though the policy of the times may be averse to any extension of this liberty, circumstances will no doubt arise, that will hereafter be as favourable to it in this country as they are now in others. Having hitherto been foremost in this great cause, it will not be in the power of man to keep us long behind the rest of Europe. Abroad, they are *the governing powers* that promote reformation.* But with us, *the people* think and act for themselves, a circumstance infinitely more promising for an effectual and permanent reformation; there being nothing of *worldly policy* in the case, but a pure *love of truth* that is the great spring of action with us.

Notwithstanding, therefore, the indolence and indifference of friends, and the silence, or virulent opposition of enemies, let the advocates of free inquiry steadily pursue their purpose. Let us examine every thing with the greatest freedom, without any regard to consequences, which, though we cannot distinctly see, we may

* "To answer their own political purposes," as Dr. Priestley remarks. See Vol. V. p. 4.

assure ourselves will be such as we shall have abundant cause to rejoice in.

Some persons dislike controversy, as leading to a *diversity of opinions.* But as this is a necessary, so it is only a temporary inconvenience. It is the only way to arrive at a permanent and useful uniformity, which it is sure to bring about at last. Religious truth cannot be so different a thing from truth of every other kind, but that it must at length overcome all opposition; and the knowledge of its having stood the test of the severest examination, by men sufficiently able and interested to oppose it, will at last produce a firm conviction, that all future opposition will be equally vain, and thus terminate in the most unwavering acquiescence.

It will be said that this process is a very slow one. But it is as sure in its operation, as it is necessary in the nature of things. Every great truth, in the firm belief of which mankind now universally acquiesce, has gone through the same process; and it has generally been longer in proportion to its importance, though somewhat shorter in proportion to the activity with which the controversies it has occasioned have been conducted. By promoting discussion, therefore, we really accelerate this progress, and are bringing forward the period of *uniformity;* while those who are the enemies of free inquiry, and who hate all controversy, are prolonging that state of suspense and diversity of opinion, which they so much dislike, and pushing back that very uniformity of opinion for which they sigh. For, this *period of controversy* must have its course, and come to its proper termination, before any valuable and lasting uniformity can take place. The conduct of those who wish to see an end of controversy at present, may be compared to that of those who should endeavour to keep a ship steady in its place at sea, when our aim should be, by using all our sails and oars, to get into harbour, where alone it can be kept steady.

The great articles which are now in a course of discussion will not be determined in our time. But if we exert ourselves, this work may be accomplished in the time of our children, or grand-children; and surely if we have any elevation or comprehension of mind, we may look forward to, and actually enjoy, the happiness we procure for *them.* We scruple not to plant trees for the benefit of posterity. Let us likewise sow the seeds of truth for them, and anticipate the acknowledgments they will make us on that account.

I do not write this from a persuasion that every thing that I have myself contended for is indisputably true. On the contrary, I have for the sake of discussion, hazarded many things, and shall probably hazard many more; and I have actually changed many opinions, theological as well as philosophical, which I have advanced since I was a writer. But if men make use of their faculties at all, and especially in that period which is most favourable to inquiry, (which is about the middle time of life,) they may arrive at so much certainty, as will justify them in expressing a considerable degree of confidence, at least with respect to those subjects to which they have given the closest attention.

I do profess to have this confidence in my opinion concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. I do not think the doctrine of Transubstan-

tiation more manifestly absurd, and this is by much the less mischievous of the two. Not that I think there are no wise and good men who are advocates for the doctrine of the Trinity. I acknowledge there are. But there are likewise many persons, of whose ability and integrity also I think very highly, who are advocates for the doctrine of Transubstantiation; and as there were learned *Pagans* five centuries after the promulgation of Christianity, there may be some respectable believers in the doctrines of the *Trinity* and of *Transubstantiation*, some ages hence.

The minds of a few *individuals* may be so locked up as that no keys we can apply will be able to open them. But it is with *the bulk of mankind* that we have to do, because they will always be within the reach of reason. And solitary unbelievers, or solitary bigots, may have their use in the general system; an use similar to that of the few idolatrous inhabitants of the land of Canaan, who were not extirpated; which was that of trying and exercising the Israelites, without having it in their power to drive them out again.

No. XII.

ANIMADVERSIONS ON SOME PASSAGES IN Mr. WHITE's SERMONS AT THE BAMPTON LECTURE.*

(See *supra*, p. 304.)

The subject of these reflections has led me to animadvert upon some pretty remarkable passages in Mr. White's *late Sermons at the Bampton Lecture*, † and the *Notes* he has subjoined to them. ‡ They are the more extraordinary considering the times in which we live, and the progress that liberality of thinking has made in this country, at least beyond the bounds of Oxford.

This writer, declaiming against *Mahometanism*, has thought proper to join *Socinianism* with it; observing, very justly, that "the title of Unitarian is equally boasted of by the disciple of Socinus, and the follower of the Arabian prophet;" but asserting at the same time, without sufficient authority, that "notwithstanding this remarkable coincidence of opinion, there is scarcely any thing which the modern Socinian affects to regard with greater abhorrence and

* For some excellent strictures on Mr. White's Sermons, as far as they relate to the doctrine of the Trinity, I refer my reader to the Preface [pp. xiv.—xlvi.] to "An Examination of Mr. Robinson of Cambridge's Plea for the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, by a late Member of the University," (a work which it certainly behoves Mr. Robinson, if he does not give up all pretensions to a love of truth, to reply to,) and also the *Appendix* to Mr. Toulmin's "Dissertations on the Internal Evidence and Excellence of Christianity." (*P.*) See *Mem. of Lindsey*, pp. 187—191; Vol. XV. p. 416.

Mr. Lindsey republished the *Examination*, with his name, and some additions in an *Advertisement*, prefixed. He there says, (p. vii.,) "I have heard with great pleasure that Mr. Robinson no longer holds the doctrine here advanced by him, but is now a believer of the Divine Unity." See Vol. XV. p. 417.

† "Sermons, containing a View of Christianity and Mahometanism, in their History, their Evidence, and their Effects; preached before the University of Oxford, in the Year 1784, at the Lecture founded by the Rev. John Bampton, M. A., By Joseph White, B.D., Fellow of Wadham College, Archbishop Laud's Professor of Arabic, and one of his Majesty's Preachers at Whitehall." Ed. 2, 1785.

‡ For Mr. Badcock's probable share in these *Notes*, see *supra*, p. 276, *Note* †.

indignation, than a comparison that associates his own tenets with those of Mahomet."*

On the contrary, as far as the agreement goes, I rejoice in the comparison, and am happy in reflecting that so great a proportion of the human species are worshippers of the one true God; hoping that it will in time be a means of bringing them to the profession of Christianity; when they shall understand that it is no infringement of the most fundamental article of their own creed.

With the same reason that Mr. White classes *Socinians* with *Mahometans*, I might class all the members of the Church of *England* with those of the Church of *Rome*, as being equally believers in the doctrine of the *Trinity;* and I do not imagine that Mr. White would think himself affronted by the comparison. I, moreover, think it quite as probable that Mr. White will turn *Papist* as that I shall turn *Mahometan.*

But this is not the only circumstance with respect to which Mr. White has betrayed his ignorance of Socinians. "The Socinian and the Mahometan," he says, "object to our doctrine, its inconsistency with human reason. The objection supposes that man is possessed of a larger comprehension than falls to the lot of mortality, and that what he cannot understand, cannot be true."†

Now, in fact, we go upon no other supposition than this, that the mind of man can comprehend that *one* is not *three*, or *three*, *one;* and this is surely no great matter to boast of. On the other hand, the great *comprehension* that he speaks of, is that which is requisite to believe that *three* are no more than *one*, and to perceive the *possibility* "of a three-fold mode of subsistence in the Divine nature."‡ Nay it requires no small degree of ability to know what that strange phrase (which it is vain to look for in the Scriptures) can possibly mean. Mr. White himself acknowledges that "the human intellect is incapable of forming any precise ideas of the subject;"§ but how any man can *believe* without having precise *ideas* of what he says, is, to my plain understanding, utterly incomprehensible. According to Mr. Locke, *believing* consists in perceiving the agreement or disagreement of ideas; but when there are *no ideas*, how can their agreement or disagreement be perceived? We *Socinians* do not say, as Mr. White supposes, that nothing can be true that we do not understand, but only that if we do not understand it, we cannot *know* it to be true. To assert the contrary, would be like my swearing to the truth of what Mr. White should say to me in *Arabic*, when I can barely read that language. Yet such a believer, by his own confession, is he in the *three-fold mode of subsistence in the Divine nature.* The words indeed are *English*, but they might as well have been in *Shanscrit.*

"We appeal," Mr. White says, "to the Scriptures," and so do the Socinians, and with as much confidence as he can do. "But," he says, "the Mahometans and Socinians have both discovered the same methods of interpretation, and either by false glosses pervert their plain and obvious meaning; or, when the testimony is so direct and explicit that no forced construction can evade it, they have

* *Notes*, p. lxi. (*P.*) † *Ibid.* p. lxiii. (*P.*) ‡ *Ibid*, p. lxi. (*P.*) § *Ibid.* (*P.*)

recourse to the last artifice of abortive zeal, the cry of interpolation."* But this is a thing not to be determined by Mr. White's *ipse dixit.* We say that the plain sense of scripture is clearly in our favour, and that the *false glosses* are what the *Trinitarians* are obliged to have recourse to.

We are confident that we have *the Scriptures*, as well as *reason* and *history*, in our favour. Our Saviour himself prayed to the Father, as "the only true God,"† (*John* xvii. 3,) and with as much fervour and humility as any of his disciples. And the apostle Paul, agreeably to the general tenor of Scripture, says (1 *Tim.* ii. 5,) "there is one God," and expressly says, that that one God is "the Father."‡ He immediately adds, "and one Mediator between God and men;" and he as expressly calls that Mediator "the man Christ Jesus."§ We have recourse to no gloss whatever in the interpretation of this language. We do not see or suspect, that it requires any; and are surprised at the strange glosses that the Trinitarians put upon it.

"The gradation," Mr. White says, "from Socinianism to Deism is very slight, and especially that species of Socinianism which has been patronized by a writer, who, in order to support it, has thought proper to abandon the inspiration of the Scriptures, and has made no scruple to call St. Paul an inconclusive reasoner," (quoting a work of mine). "On such a footing Socinianism may possibly maintain its ground. But on such a footing Deism may maintain its ground much better; and it is rather wonderful that those who have given up so much should retain any thing. For what is there in Christianity, when all its distinguishing doctrines are taken away that could render it a subject worthy of a particular revelation?"‖ If this be the case, it may be expected that I shall soon become a *Deist*, though I imagine Mr. White will expect that I shall first become a *Mahometan.*

Mr. White is too apt to amuse himself with *theory*, without a sufficient regard to *facts.* There have been many *Socinians* before

* *Notes*, p. lxiii. When Mr. White wrote this he hardly recollected his high and just encomium on Dr. Clarke and Newton, neither of them *Trinitarians*, and the last thought by many to have been a *Socinian*, and who, in *two Letters to M. Le Clerc*, has clearly shewn the certainty of the only considerable *interpolations* that Mr. White can allude to, viz. that of 1 *Tim.* iii. 17, "God *manifested* in the flesh," and 1 *John* v. 7, of the "three that bear record in heaven." [See Vol. XIV. pp. 132, 133, 433, 434.] "Who," says Mr. White, (*Sermons*, p. 38,) "are the champions of infidelity that deserve to be compared with a Taylor, a Wilkins, a Cudworth, a Barlow, a Clarke, a Boyle, and a Newton?"

Had all such men as *Locke*, *Clarke*, and *Newton*, acted with perfect uprightness and true wisdom, as well as thought with freedom, [See Vol. IV. p. 315,] the Church of England would not now have been Trinitarian; and yet declamatory preaching would still have been on the side of the established faith in all its changes. What Mr. White says of the Church of England in its present state, is also said by the members of the Church of Rome, has ever been said by the members of all established churches, and will, no doubt, continue to be said through all their future variations. "We who live in these enlightened times," (*Sermons*, p. 472,) "have no misconceptions of Christianity to set right, no corruptions of it to purify." This is more than I would choose to say of my own opinions. I may see reason to change them to-morrow, and then should be ashamed of the boast of to-day. If Mr. White be a young man, as by his style I suspect him to be, he may live to see a change in the creed of his all-perfect national church. (*P.*)

† See Vol. XIII. pp. 332, 333.

‡ 1 *Cor.* viii. 6. See Vol. XIV. p. 80.

§ See *ibid*, pp. 126, 127.

‖ *Notes*, p. lxvii. (*P.*)

our age, though Mr. White may be ignorant of this. It is possible, however, that he may have heard or read that formerly *Poland* abounded with them. How many of these will he say became *Deists?* Socinianism is no new thing in this country. There were considerable numbers of Socinians in the time of Mr. Biddle, and Mr. Firmin, one of the first of men. They were persecuted, as were the Socinians in Poland; but did any of them take refuge in Deism? *Socinianism* is evidently gaining ground in this country at present. I do not believe that the church or the universities are free from it. How many of these *Socinians* have become *Deists?* I do not say there are no instances of it. But this I will engage for, that for one Socinian that Mr. White can shew to have become a Deist, I will produce a hundred, who, without having ever been Socinians, or perhaps without having heard of Socinianism, (which might have stopped their progress,) have passed at once from the highest orthodoxy (even a higher species than Mr. White can boast of) to *Deism* or *Atheism.*

This is the common transition of the present age, and a very natural one too. For, when a man is required to believe what he finds it absolutely impossible for him to believe, as that *bread is flesh*, or that *three are one*, and is told that he must take or reject the whole system, he, of course, rejects the whole; having no other alternative. Such is the actual state and progress of things at present, that Mr. White may assure himself, there will soon be no medium between Socinianism and Atheism. He must himself take his choice of one of the two, or else continue to *believe* (if he can believe) *without ideas*, which are the necessary requisites of all belief. What I now say is reason supported by indisputable facts. Mr. White has only to open his eyes, and he must see them; whereas what he says is mere conjecture, equally contradicted by the most glaring facts, and the evident nature of things.*

* Mr. White's total inattention to *facts* is conspicuous in other parts of his work. The object of the most admired, I believe, of his discourses, is to shew that the forms of free government, and the progress that has been made in arts and sciences in Christendom, are owing to Christianity, and that the despotism and ignorance of the *Mahometans* are owing to their religious principles. But, in fact, he might with as much reason assert that the philosophical discoveries of *Socinians* are owing to their *Socinianism*, that those made by foreign philosophers, (the greater part of whom are *Atheists*,) are owing to their *Atheism*, or that Tenterden steeple was the cause of Goodwin's sands.

He does not consider that, though the first *Caliphs* were rude barbarians, and one of them ordered the famous library at *Alexandria* to be burnt, their successors were, for some centuries, the greatest patrons of literature and science in the world, and would have redeemed such a library at any price. He does not consider, or perhaps never heard, (for if he had it became him not to have concealed so important a circumstance,) that they spared no expense to procure *Greek* books, and to get them translated into *Arabic;* and that one principal means of the Christian world emerging from its barbarism, was their becoming the scholars of Mahometans.

If *Unitarianism* be so near a-kin to *Mahometanism* as Mr. White represents it to be, it might be expected to be equally unfavourable to the pursuits of literature and improvements in science. And if *Trinitarianism* be the essence and quintessence of Christianity, which is so highly and exclusively favourable to all intellectual exertion, it would hardly be doubted but that (if there should be such prodigies as *Unitarian* poets, critics, historians, or philosophers) in looking over a list of those who have at all distinguished themselves by works of taste, or discoveries in science, the *Trinitarians* might be known by the superiority of their genius, and

"What," says this writer, "is there in Christianity, when all its distinguishing doctrines are taken away, that could render it a subject worthy of a particular revelation? Did the stupendous miracles that were wrought to introduce and establish it in the world, and the train of prophecies which were gradually disclosed to point out its high and illustrious origin, find an end suitable to their extraordinary nature?" *

As Mr. White shews so great a contempt for *Socinian Christianity*, I will tell him, or his readers, what it is that he makes so light of. It is nothing less than "the belief of the resurrection of all the human race to an immortal life of happiness or misery, according to men's characters and conduct here," concerning which we believe that the light of nature gives us no information. Can Mr. White think of

the greater light they have thrown upon the knowledge of nature, having (as Mr. White might say) so much more perfect knowledge of the God of nature; and, without asking any questions, it might be taken for granted that the most eminent in every walk of literature were the divines of *Rome* and of *Oxford*. But if Mr. White will, cast his eye on a list of writers and inventors, he will find the facts as ill to correspond to this theory as the others that I have mentioned in this note.

Unitarians and all sectaries are, to the disgrace of this country, excluded from the advantages of the universities. But God, our impartial father, has not withheld his common gifts. He has distributed his talents without distinction of Trinitarian or Unitarian, and has by one means or other put it in our power to make the improvement of them that he requires.

Mr. White's declaiming about the connexion between Christianity and free government, is equally unsupported by reason or facts. Did the *Roman* empire become free from the time of its being Christian, or was there ever any Christian government in *Asia* or *Africa* that was a free one? Are there not several of the Christian states in Europe in which the people have no share in the government, either in making laws or imposing taxes? And has it not been manifestly owing to other circumstances, and not to their Christianity, that any of them are free? (*P.*)

This *admired Discourse* must have been *Sermon* IX., in 2 *Parts*, pp. 385—463, which formed the last *Bampton Lecture*. At the opening of the *Discourse* are the following eloquent passages:—

"The faith of Mahomet, wherever it is established, is united with despotic power. On the banks of the Ganges, and on the shores of the Caspian, under the influence of climates the most unlike, and manners the most opposite, it is still found accompanied with servitude and subjection: every free, and every gallant people whom it has involved in the progress of its power, have abandoned their rights when they enlisted themselves under the banner of the prophet, and have forgotten in the title of the faithful, the pride of independence and the security of freedom.

"The religion of Christ, on the contrary, is found to exist and to flourish under every variety of political power. In the different periods of its history it has been united with every form of government: and of the nations among whom it is now professed, the most general, and perhaps the most discriminating feature is that equal and courteous system of manners, which has operated in so striking a manner to limit the progress of tyranny; and which, even in the few countries where despotism is established, has served to soften the austerity of its administration." *Sermons*, pp. 386, 387.

It now appears highly probable that Dr. Priestley was here unconsciously contending with his inveterate antagonist, Mr. Badcock, under the name of *White*. Among the *Facts* extorted from Dr. Gabriel, by Dr. White's indiscreet friends, in 1789, is a letter from *White* to *Badcock*, dated Oxford, November 27, 1783, in which he says, "Lecture the VIIIth I leave wholly to yourself." According to the will of the founder, the Bampton Lecture was to consist of "eight Divinity Lecture Sermons." In a note Dr. Gabriel says, "What is here called the VIIIth Lecture, may be the IXth," as "Dr. White is well known to have preached an additional Lecture." *Facts*, pp. 21—25. See *supra*, p. 276, *Note* †.

* *Notes*, p. lxvii.

this but for a moment, and say that it is *nothing?* Had he never heard of any other Christianity at all, he would, I doubt not, have been in raptures at the first suggestion of it. What are all other tenets relating to religion compared to this? It is evidently every thing that can greatly influence men's conduct. All the great difference in *real value* of the several modes of Christianity can only consist in the different degrees of firmness with which they enable the mind to hold this one only great practical doctrine. And whether is it easier to do this in conjunction with as few *extraneous articles* as possible, or in connexion with other doctrines, which, separately taken, must appear highly improbable, and therefore must necessarily lessen the credibility of any system of which they make a part?

The great object and end of religion is to make men lead good lives, in which the belief of a future state of retribution has, no doubt, the greatest influence. Now what can the belief of the doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, or of the *Trinity*, add to this? Being, as it is allowed, *hard to be understood*, and of course to be *believed*, in themselves, they must necessarily operate as a dead weight upon every system into which they enter. Yet Mr. White can say, "Socinianism cuts to the very root of all that is distinguishing in the gospel," that gospel, the great object of which was *to bring life and immortality to light.* "It destroys," he says, "the necessity, and even the importance, of a miraculous interposition, and gives the Infidel too great reason to exclaim, that all that was extraordinary was superfluous, and that the apparatus was too expensive and too splendid for the purposes to which it was applied."* As if any thing could be farther from the reach of human discovery than a future life, or more require a divine interposition to establish the belief of it by miracles. But let us hear what Mr. White has farther to say on the subject.

"Morality and a future state," he says, "include the whole of Christianity, according to the representation of a Socinian." It is acknowledged; and what else is there of real value in any religion? "But suppose a Deist should adopt, (as many have, and justly may,) the same morality, and the same sanctions on the ground of natural evidence, wherein lies the essential and discriminating characteristic of Christianity? Where lies the real difference between a believer in divine revelation and a religious Theist?"†

Here again Mr. White wanders from *fact*, and loses himself in vague *theory.* Where are those *religious Theists* that he speaks of? Where are the men who, without believing revelation, discover, or will profess that they have, a serious expectation of a future life? The probability is, that my acquaintance among unbelievers is as extensive as that of Mr. White, and I declare that I know no such persons. Whatever may have been the case formerly, there must be very few such persons now. Nor can this be wondered at, when the doctrine of *a soul* is so evidently contrary to every principle by which philosophers are guided in their researches, and that of *a resurrection* is naturally so improbable.

* *Notes*, p. lxviii. (*P.*) † *Ibid.* lxvii. lxviii. (*P.*)

But should there be found a man who really believes in a future life of retribution, and governs his conduct by that faith, so as to be as perfect a character as a Christian, I scruple not to say that *to him* Christianity would be superfluous. What is all religion but a *means* to a certain *end;* and if any man can, in fact, attain to this end, viz. to lead a *godly, righteous, and sober life*, without Christianity, (which has this very thing for its great object,) he is as good a man, and as valuable a character, as any other person who attains the same end by the help of it. Let Mr. White shew the difference, if he can.

But how does what Mr. White says here (of many *Deists* having, and *justly* too, the same morality, and the same sanctions on the ground of natural evidence, that Christians have) agree with what he says?—"The gospel has brought life and immortality to light. It has dispersed all those shades which so hang over it, as to render it to the eye of unassisted reason a subject of doubtful speculation, rather than of cheerful hope.——It has reduced to a certainty what nature, at the farthest stretch of its powers, could barely regard as a conjecture.——The clear discovery of a future state, and the application of it as one of the great sanctions of religion, were reserved for the gospel. Hence we are taught to regard man in a higher and nobler light than nature, with all her boasted attributes, and most splendid accomplishments, can represent him. We are taught to consider him as the heir of immortality, as made for two worlds, and as qualified to act in both, with increasing capacities both of moral improvement, and of physical happiness."*

According to one of these passages many Deists have, and *justly may have*, the same persuasion concerning a future state with the Christian; whereas according to the other he can only, with the farthest stretch of his powers, *doubtfully speculate*, and attain to nothing more than bare *conjecture*. Do we see here the consistency of truth, or the flourish of the orator adapting his embellishments to the subjects of which he treats?

Through an utter ignorance of facts, Mr. White says, "There is no period of the Christian church in which the divinity of Christ was not admitted, as a primary article, nor can the enemies of this doctrine point out the *time* when, if it be a falsity, it was admitted as a truth; much less can they *account* for its admission into the several symbols of Christian faith, in the very first ages, if it was a doctrine unknown to Christ and his apostles. The Socinian hypothesis staggers all speculation. It is contrary to every maxim of historical evidence; and, if pursued to its obvious consequences, includes in it the overthrow of Christianity, and renders every record of every age suspicious and uncertain. It reverses the common rules by which we judge of past events, and, in the strictest sense of the expression, makes the *first last*, and the *last first*—makes the less superior to the greater, and what is doubtful and partial more decisive than what is full, clear, and certain. Examine Socinianism by any rule of history that has been adopted for the trial of any fact, or the determination that has been passed on any

* *Sermons*, pp. 371, 372. *(P.)*

opinion, and we can scarcely avoid seeing its utter inconsistency with the universal creed of the Christian church, from the earliest period of its existence to the present time."*

This is all mere *unfounded assertion*, and the reverse of the truth, in every point, as I have in a great measure shewn already, in several publications, and which I engage to shew, with abundantly more evidence, in a work which I have now in the press. I maintain, (and I do not, like Mr. White, expect that my bare word should be taken for it,) that the Christian church was for a considerable time universally *Unitarian;* and I shall shew distinctly *by what means*, and *about what time*, the doctrine of the Trinity was introduced, what it was at first, and what it grew to be afterwards. This will clearly prove it to have been an *innovation* in Christianity, if ever there was one in any system. I shall produce all my authorities from original writers, and appeal to the most incontrovertible *maxims of historical criticism* † for every deduction from them. And I challenge Mr. White, or any future Bampton Lecturer, to disprove what I shall allege.

This is a business that is not to be decided by big, *swelling words*, but by an appeal to *facts*, and the rules of just reasoning from them. And now that the minds of men are awake, and attentive to this important discussion, it will behove Mr. White, and every other defender of modern orthodoxy, to be more guarded in what they throw out respecting it. They deceive themselves if they imagine that *Socinians* will be frightened by empty sounds. We boast of no superiority of understanding. Our simple scheme does not require it. But we think we have common sense, so that we can tell that *two* and *two* make *four*, and shall not easily be persuaded that they make *five*.

No man can appear to be more sensible of the importance of standing forth in the defence of the received faith, at the present critical juncture, than Mr. White himself. He boasts of champions ready to answer any proper call, and of the spirit with which they are prepared to act. "Infidelity," he says, "we know has its zealots, and heresies of the most malignant tendency have their advocates; advocates, I mean, who scorn accommodation with what they are pleased to call the inventions of priestcraft, and the prejudices of the vulgar; who make a triumphant boast of the freedom with which they oppose the peculiar and distinguishing doctrines of Christianity; who are neither ashamed nor afraid to declare openly to the world, that as they have hitherto exerted themselves, so will they continue to exert themselves, in demolishing the fortresses of orthodoxy."‡

* *Notes*, pp. lxiv. lxv. (*P.*) † See *supra*, pp. 517—519.

‡ *Sermons*, pp. 13, 14. As it is possible that Mr. White may allude to the subject of the following *History*, which was never published except in a newspaper, and I am informed that credit is still given to the idle tale, I have thought it might not be amiss to insert it here, exactly as it was printed twelve years ago.

The History of a Calumny.

From the *St. James's Chronicle* of Jan. 21, 1773.

Having been much solicited to inquire into the foundation of a report, which was calculated to be very injurious to me, by representing me as a real enemy,

What Mr. White meant by *heresies of the most malignant tendency*, he does not say, but I suppose he meant those doctrines which are commonly called *Socinian;* and it is true that there are

at the same time that I pretended to be a zealous friend, of Christianity, I at length undertook to do it, partly to amuse myself, and partly to oblige my friends; being sensible, that if I had not already given the fullest satisfaction with respect to my being a sincere believer of Christianity, it could not be in my power to do it; and that even the professed defence of the evidences of Christianity, which I have just published, would not make any impression in my favour.

About the middle of the last summer I was informed, from very credible authority, that Mr. John Carr, architect, (and, I believe, then Mayor,) of York, declared in a private company, consisting of very respectable persons of the county of York, (and alleged it as an evidence of the Dissenters being, notwithstanding their professions, the secret and determined enemies of Christianity,) that he had seen a letter of Dr. Priestley's, written to a confidential friend, in which he had said, that "he hoped he should live to see the time, when the imposture of Christianity would be banished out of the world, or words to that effect." Some time after also a stranger wrote to me, informing me, that much credit was given to the story, and requesting an explanation of it.

Mr. Carr, to whom I wrote upon the subject, declares, in a letter dated Nov. 1, 1772, that the charge against him was false and exaggerated; but that, about a year before, he was on a visit at Mr. Osborne's, of Ravensfield, near Doncaster, when Mr. Samuel Walker, of Rotherham, said, that I had expressed myself, in a letter, (which he *thinks* Mr. Walker said he had seen,) that "I had no great belief in Jesus Christ, or words to that effect;" and that Mr. Walker added other expressions from my letter, much to the same purport, which he remembered "tended to lessen the veracity of our Saviour." For the truth of this account, he appeals to Mr. Osborne, in whose house the conversation passed.

On the other hand, Mr. Aaron Walker (whom, it seems, Mr. Carr had mistaken for his brother Samuel) declares, in a letter to me, dated November 28, that all he said at Mr. Osborne's was, that he had been informed by my brother, (the Rev. Mr. Priestley, of Manchester,) at the house of his brother, Samuel Walker, and in the presence of his brother, Mr. Thorpe, and several others, that I had said "that myself and some others would not rest till we had rooted out of the church the idol Christ;" and that, being interrogated at Mr. Osborne's, whether I had written or spoken it, he said, "he was not certain, but he believed I had done both."

This brings the story to the state in which I had heard of it very near two years before. For a correspondent of mine, in the West of England, then informed me, that it was currently reported in his neighbourhood, and all over that part of the country, that I had boasted, in the presence of the Rev. Mr. Hitchin, of London, [minister of the Independent congregation, White Row,] that "I would not rest till I had pulled down that idol, Jesus Christ." This is also referred to, as a *threatening* of what I would do (though my name is not mentioned) in an anonymous pamphlet, published this last summer; and a gentleman of distinguished worth some time after informed a friend of mine, that it was said to have been one of the curious things which the bishop of Landaff had quoted, in order to render myself, and the Dissenters in general, obnoxious to the Government, in the House of Lords. [1772. See *Ann. Reg.* XV. pp. 96—101.]

Being in London in the spring of this year, I asked Mr. Hitchin, whether he had ever heard me make any such speech as that above-mentioned. He said he had not, but that he had heard it of my brother, in his house. Afterwards, meeting with Mr. Hitchin and my brother together in Yorkshire, and desiring an explanation of this business, my brother acknowledged that he had said "he believed I would endeavour all I could to extirpate the doctrine of the divinity of Christ," but that he had no authority for this, except my writings.

Thus this report, which, I am informed, has been eagerly propagated in many parts of England, comes to nothing more than this, that some of the more sagacious readers of my theological writings have been able to collect from them, that, with respect to the doctrine of the *Trinity*, my sentiments are not *Athanasian*.

It may amuse some speculative persons, who attend to the influence of pre-

now many advocates of those doctrines, who have all that confidence in the truth of their own principles that he ascribes to them; who consider the doctrine of the *Trinity*, in particular, as the greatest and most dangerous corruption of Christianity, and who will spare no endeavours to root it out. They have drawn the sword, and have thrown away the scabbard.

Mr. White adds, "In repressing the violence, and in exposing the absurdities of such writers, we act a part which prejudiced men may, perhaps, impute to unworthy motives. But why, then, are we blamed for doing to others what others, if they supposed us to lie under any dangerous delusion, would make a merit of doing to us? Is that officious in the children of wisdom, which in their adversaries is benevolent? Is their firmness our obstinacy? Their cause surely has no presumptive proof of superiority. Their abilities are not of a greater size. Their activity is not directed to nobler ends.

"They laugh, indeed, at our blindness, and they rail at our ardour; but to hear the rude clamours of those who assault Christianity, or of those who betray it, without emotion, and without resistance, would imply a tameness of spirit, which our enemies would be the first to insult and to ridicule. By silent forbearance, or languid opposition, we should indeed give too much colour to an insinuation, lately thrown out by one who has rushed foremost in the ranks, and sounded with a louder blast than his fellows the horn of battle, that we *are at ease in Zion*, only because we are grown indifferent to her better interests."*

Who Mr. White means by the "one who has lately rushed foremost in the ranks," &c., he does not say, but probably he means myself; and it is true that I wish not to come behind any

judice, to observe how much this report has gained in passing through a very few hands, viz. from my brother to Mr. Hitchin, or Mr. Walker, and from Mr. Walker to Mr. Carr.

The greatest difference is between Mr. Carr and Mr. Walker, the former representing me as an enemy to Christianity itself, and one who would rejoice in the extirpation of it; and the other as an enemy to what I consider as a great corruption of Christianity, and therefore as one who would rejoice in the purification and extension of it. I know nothing of either of these gentlemen, but from common report, which speaks of Mr. Walker as a zealous Calvinist, and of Mr. Carr as a zealous Churchman; which of them may be presumed, from these circumstances, to be more disposed to calumniate me, and therefore which of them is more probably the guilty person, I leave others to determine. There is also a considerable difference between the account of my brother and that of Mr. Walker, or Mr. Hitchin; but since the original author of this report disavows it, I do not think it any business of mine to reconcile these inconsistencies. Let them do it, if they choose, among themselves.

I wish this affair may be a lesson to them and others, not to be so ready to propagate reports to the prejudice of persons who are odious to them on account of their religious principles; lest, instead of gaining their end, in discrediting others, they should discover the malignity of their own tempers, by shewing a propensity to slander their neighbours, and thereby bring disgrace upon themselves, with all men of sense and integrity.

Leeds, December 19. JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

N. B. A copy of this paper has been sent to all the persons whose names are mentioned in it. (*P.*)

* *Sermons*, pp. 14, 15.

one for zeal in the cause in which we are jointly engaged. This is no subject of boasting. I have reconnoitred the force of the enemy, and see nothing that can daunt the most timid. I have met some of their advanced guard, but I want to see their *Goliah*. Mr. White assumes the boasting language, but I suspect he wants the strength and the armour. The real Goliah in this business is, in the opinion of many, *the Act of William and Mary*. Mr. White disclaims the aid of this champion, and of any civil authority, in these matters,* for which magnanimity he is to be commended, but he should have considered whether he had any other support more effectual than this tried one.

" Wisdom," Mr. White likewise says, " reserves its vigour for exertions worthy of its own noble aims; and if it be *zealously affected*, it is *in a good thing*. Actuated by such motives, and placed in such circumstances, it not only defies all the arts of calumny, but challenges some tribute of praise. The everlasting truths of the gospel with which the welfare of mankind is most nearly connected, demand our serious regards, and justify the warmest efforts of zeal, at once directed by knowledge, and tempered by philanthropy." †

What may be inferred from all this, but that Mr. White feels himself sufficiently prepared and animated to enter the lists with any *Socinian*, in defence of the doctrines of his church, especially that of the divinity of Christ; and that he has no objection to meet him whom he describes as having " rushed foremost in the ranks, and sounded with a louder blast than his fellows the horn of battle"? If *I* be the person intended by this description, (of which Mr. White is the best judge,) I must consider what he has said as a challenge to myself in particular; and I can assure him that I am far from feeling a wish to decline it. Hitherto we have had nothing but *words* and bold *assertions* from Mr. White. I own that I have a great curiosity to see his *arguments;* and therefore I profess myself ready to meet him in the open field of *reason*, of *scripture*, or of *history*. Nay, I, in my turn, call upon him, as a man who would be thought to be *a lover of truth*, to justify the assertions which I have quoted above, and which I maintain to be absolutely void of truth.

I call upon him in particular, to point out " the gradation" that he speaks of " from Socinianism to Deism," ‡ and to shew how the former " cuts to the very root of all that is distinguishing in the gospel."

I call upon him to shew that the divinity of Christ was ever acknowledged by the apostles, or any Christians in the age immediately following them.

And, lastly, I call upon him to shew that the doctrine of the

* " Let not the freedom of inquiry," he says, (*Sermons*, p. 21,) " be shackled." " They (the children of wisdom)" he says, (p. 23,) " are convinced that the weapons of the Christian warfare *are not carnal, but spiritual;* and that our religion, though protected by human power against violence and outrage, for the sake of preserving its members in peace, yet is to make its way in the world only by the force of evidence, and to keep its ground as well by the moderation, as by the abilities of its advocates." (*P.*)

† *Sermons*, pp. 12, 13. (*P.*) ‡ *Notes*, p. lxvii.

Trinity, as defined in the creeds of the Church of England, can possibly be true; so that any man who attends to the meaning of the words in which it is expressed, can believe it if he would.

I can assure Mr. White, that no man shall ever call upon *me* in this manner, without hearing from me on the subject, either to acknowledge my error, or to defend what may still appear to me to be the truth; and I think it evidently becomes every writer who would not mislead the public, to hold the same conduct. I have told Dr. Horsley, that "if he be an honest man, and of an ingenuous mind, he must, in some mode or other, either refute the charge," (of gross ignorance and misrepresentation that I have advanced against him,) "or acknowledge the justness of it." He continues [1785] *speechless*. But the public can be at no loss what construction to put upon his silence.

Mr. White has voluntarily drawn the eyes of the public upon him, by sounding what he calls *the horn of battle*, and making himself responsible for the appearance of numerous *sons of wisdom* and of zeal, on the present occasion, which he represents as extremely critical. Let him, then, stand forth himself, or if he distrust his own single arm, let him produce the *many champions* of whom he makes so great a boast.

No. XIII.

REMARKS

*On Mr. Howes's "Discourse on the Abuse of the Talent of Disputation in Religion, particularly as practised by Dr. Priestley, Mr. Gibbon, and others of the modern Sect of Philosophic Christians."**

(See *supra*, p. 490.)

After writing the preceding animadversions on Mr. White's performance, I thought it might be expected that, as I have engaged to be as explicit as possible with respect to the subject of the controversy relating to the doctrine of the primitive church, I should take some notice of Mr. Howes's *Discourse*, especially as, like Dr. Horsley's *Charge*, it was published at the request of a body of clergy who heard it, and the writer, in his *Critical Observations on Books*, has shewn himself to be a man of learning. I must acknowledge, however, that, had I read nothing of Mr. Howes's besides this *discourse*, I should not have formed a very high opinion of his acquaintance with *Christian antiquity*.

The ground that Mr. Howes has undertaken to defend is a very extraordinary one indeed. He asserts, that not "any one Christian sect whatever, of the first ages, ever held any such opinion as the mere humanity of Christ;"† and that "all the sects differed from the orthodox, chiefly with respect to the time when the union of divinity and humanity took place, not with respect to the fact

* "Preached in the cathedral church, Norwich, at the primary visitation of the bishop, June 23, 1784, by Thomas Howes.

† *Discourse*, p. 13. (*P.*)

itself: the latter conceiving this union to take place at the incarnation; the Gnostics and other sects not until the baptism of Jesus."* "The Gnostics, Nazarenes, Ebionites, Theodotians, and all their followers down to Photinus, had no conception of ever extending the mere humanity of Jesus to any later period than his baptism; and the same principle pervaded them all, viz. that of ennobling, not abasing the dignity of the Christ."†

But is it at all credible, that so small a difference as that of admitting the divinity of Christ to have taken place a few years sooner or later, could possibly have caused all that animosity which the orthodox expressed towards the *Gnostics* and ancient Unitarians? Such assertions as these deserve no serious reply.

We are promised more evidence of this curious assertion, "in the fourth volume of *Critical Observations on Books ancient and modern*, sold by B. White, Fleet-street."‡ But in the mean time, Mr. Howes has favoured us with a specimen of his evidence, in some extracts from *Epiphanius*, who most ridiculously ascribes the opinions of the *Gnostics* to some of the later *Ebionites*, and who also represents them as worshipping water as a God. Mr. Howes also attributes the extracts from *Theodotus* in *Clemens Alexandrinus* to Theodotus the Tanner. I need not tell any scholar how contrary this notion is to all probability, or how destitute it is of the least shadow of evidence in antiquity. *Sylburgius* and *Potter*, the truly learned editors of *Clemens Alexandrinus*, were far from being of his opinion.

Mr. Howes is pleased to represent me as one of those who, "having been beaten out of all their pretences for absolute unbelief, concerning the origin, nature, and utility of the Christian revelation, seem now desirous—to adopt a kind of compromise with Christianity. For they now affect to style themselves rational Christians, and philosophers; that is, they pretend to retain some parts of the Christian revelation, such as they judge most proper, but to reject other parts of it." This he ascribes to a want "either of a pure *intention* of the heart to search out truth in their speculations, or else of a *conscientious* adherence to the reality of facts, and to the right sense of words to which they refer; or else of a clear *conviction* of their own understanding, concerning the origin and progress of Christianity, the nature of its speculative doctrine, or its practical tendency, to promote the end of the revealed commandment."§

As to Mr. Howes's insinuation that I only *pretend* to believe Christianity, I think I may safely leave it to the judgment of any

* *Discourse*, p. 15. (*P.*)

† *Ibid.* pp. 21, 22. (*P.*)

‡ *Ibid.* p. 15, *Note.* (*P.*)

§ *Ibid.* p. 6. (*P.*) Mr. Howes complains, not very reasonably, of this quotation as having misrepresented him. Those "beaten out of all their pretences," &c. he had described as having appeared "in the *beginning* of the century;" these, he says, were "*adversaries* of Christianity—to whom are opposed the *compromisers* with Christianity *at the close* of the century." Of these, Dr. Priestley is represented as the chief; yet Mr. Howes attempts to evade the justice of his opponent's strictures, because he had allowed these *compromisers* "to have formed a *new sect*, and this expressly a *Christian* one." See *Crit. Obs.* No. XI. 1800, pp. ii. iii.

impartial person, whether it be more probable that the profession of Christianity by a Dissenter, or by a beneficed clergyman in this country, is mere *pretence*. And yet I do not suspect Mr. Howes's sincerity, as he does mine. If he be capable of blushing, he must, on reflection, be ashamed of these insinuations, which he has expressed in a great variety of phrases towards the close of his discourse. What Mr. Howes meant by classing me with Mr. Gibbon,* is also best known to himself. I hope it arose from the same ignorance which led him to class the *Gnostics* with the *Unitarians*. However, though equal mention is made of Mr. Gibbon and myself in the title page of the Discourse, there is no mention made of Mr. Gibbon, or any reference to him, in the body of it. Are we to infer from this, that a *mistaken Christian* is a character more obnoxious to a high churchman than a known *unbeliever?*

No. XIV.

REMARKS ON A PAMPHLET ENTITLED "PRIMITIVE CANDOUR;

Or, the Moderation of the earlier Fathers towards the Unitarians, the necessary Consequence of the Circumstances of the Times; being an Attempt to estimate the Weight of their Testimony in behalf of the proper Divinity of Christ." †

(See *supra*, p. 541, *Note* †.)

SINCE the preceding *Sermon*, with the *Reflections*, [No. XI.,] &c., subjoined to it were sent to the press, I have seen a pamphlet entitled *Primitive Candour*, &c., and I take this opportunity of acknowledging the pleasure I have received from the perusal of it, as it gives me a prospect of what I have long and earnestly wished for, viz. that of having a learned and candid antagonist, with whom to discuss the merits of the important question that is now before the public, relating to the doctrine of the primitive church concerning the person of Christ. Two volumes, out of *four*, of my larger work, on this subject, are now printed, and the whole will, I hope, be ready for publication in a few months; and I hereby inform the *anonymous* author of this pamphlet, that I shall think myself happy if, when he has read it with care, he will give me, and the public, his real opinion of it, and the reasons on which it is founded.

* On a similar compliment by Dr. Horsley, see *supra*, p. 260.

† Published 1785, *anonymously;* but justly attributed to Dr. Benjamin Davies, Theological Tutor at Homerton College. Dr. Davies, who died at Bath in 1819, aged about 80, continued through life a zealous Trinitarian. Residing at Reading in 1812, when the late Mr. Vidler first preached *Unitarianism* there, Dr. Davies, to oppose "the sect every where spoken against," preached and published a Sermon, entitled "The Deity of the Saviour, the Riches of Christianity," a composition not quite worthy of the Author of *Primitive Candour*.

It is related, I believe correctly, in a "Memoir of Dr. Davies," that "Dr. Priestley was so pleased with the temper manifested in his production, that he sought and obtained an interview with him, and owned that Dr. Davies was the only one of his opponents who had treated him as a Christian." *Evangelical Magazine*, 1819, XXVII. p. 226. This was in 1785, before Dr. Price or Dr. Geddes had written.

Had this writer personally known me, or indeed many of my acquaintance, he would not, I am persuaded, have charged me, as he does, with relying on my "strength of genius to explore all the regions of moral, spiritual, and divine truth."* Where this advantage is possessed in the highest degree, it is of very little avail in a public controversy, carried on in writing; and, therefore, though not possessed of it myself, I see nothing in it of which I ever stand in awe. The confidence I sometimes express arises solely from a full persuasion of the goodness of the cause in which I engage; and this has always been the slow growth of patient inquiry, of much labour and close thinking. Still, however, I am never fully satisfied of the truth of any opinion that I adopt, in religion or philosophy, till it has undergone as fair a *scrutiny* as I can procure, by means of *a public discussion;* and to promote this I would spare nothing to encourage the timid or to provoke the bold. I think I see in my present antagonist more of the qualities that are requisite for this purpose than I have yet found in any other, a real *love of truth*, accompanied with competent *ability*, *learning* and *candour*.

I would not anticipate much of what I shall advance, with its proper authorities, in my larger work; but I would observe, that this writer has chosen his ground much better than any of my former opponents, though I have little doubt of being able to convince even himself that it is untenable. He, in direct opposition to Mr. Howes, acknowledges that the *Unitarians* were numerous in the primitive church;† but he thinks that, because their tenets were not very obnoxious, when compared with those of the *Gnostics*, all the indignation of the apostles and primitive Christians fell upon the latter. He also treats me as a Christian, and an honest man; and if he choose to enter into this discussion, I hope he will see no reason to think more unfavourably of me than he does at present.

He makes an apology for dwelling so long as he does upon the tenets of the *Gnostics*, but they certainly deserve a close examination. I have employed a great part of my first volume on this subject, and am confident that a due attention to their tenets is much more favourable to my argument than to his.

I shall here observe, with respect to this subject, that he will hardly find, in the times of the apostles, any trace of that tenet of the *Gnostics*, for which he justly thinks they were afterwards the most obnoxious, viz. their ascribing the making of the world to any other than the Supreme God. It is evident that it was their doctrine concerning *the person of Christ*, that of his not having real flesh and blood, that gave the chief offence to the apostle *John*. But what could this be, compared to the opinion of his being a *mere man*, if *John* himself thought him to be the Supreme God? Is it at all probable that persons whose opinions were so diametrically opposite should join their forces, as this writer supposes, to combat what was, comparatively speaking, a mere shadow? It is much more probable that the Trinitarians and Unitarians of the present day should forget their differences, and jointly attack the *Arians*, whose sentiments concerning the person of Christ more nearly

* *Prim. Cand.* p. 52. (*P.*) † *Ibid.* p. 10.

resemble those of the *Gnostics*, than any others that are now professed.

Besides, I must observe, that the desire of this writer to throw an odium upon the tenets of the *Gnostics* (thereby to make them appear more obnoxious than those of the Unitarians) has unwarily misled him into an actual misrepresentation of them. The *Gnostics* acknowledged one supreme God, as well as the orthodox, and they ascribed to him the same perfections. They only thought that the material world, on account of the mixture of evil in it, was unworthy of being his workmanship. They believed in the divine mission of Christ, the immortality of the soul, and a life of retribution after death. They also agreed with the *orthodox*, and differed from the *Unitarians*, in supposing that Christ was a being who had a much higher origin than *from the earth*. They asserted that he came down *from heaven*, where he had enjoyed rank and power superior to those of the Creator of the world. Christians so nearly agreed in these, as well as other points, might very well (as in fact they did) equally endeavour to overbear the poor Unitarians, who thought that Christ was nothing more than a mere man, though a prophet; who had no being before he was born in this world, and who had no rank afterwards, but what was *given* him as the reward of his obedience here.

I am as ready as this author himself can be to acknowledge that *Justin Martyr*, *Irenœus*, and all the writers he mentions, were *Trinitarians*, (though not *Athanasians*,) and also that they did not scruple to assert that their own faith was that of the universal church. But what I undertake to prove, and even from their own writings, is, that this assertion is not true. I shall shew that their opinions were derived from the *Platonic* philosophy, while the common people, who had no philosophical instruction, as well as many truly learned men who despised it, were simply Unitarians. I profess to make it as evident that the doctrine of the Trinity was derived from *Platonism*, as that the acorn comes from the oak.

Admitting, as I do, that *Irenœus* and the other Christian fathers were Trinitarians, I cannot expect that they should have combated the *Gnostic* doctrines on the principle of Christ being a mere man, which this writer unreasonably demands. This was not their own opinion; but I shall shew that there *were* Christians who combated the Gnostics on Unitarian principles, though the generality of Christian writers did not.

The very *creed* which this author gives us from *Irenœus*, as opposed to the tenets of the Gnostics, goes upon other principles than those of Irenæus himself, and the other writers he mentions. This creed was, in its essential articles, of primitive and Unitarian antiquity; for it asserts that it was the "one God, the Father Almighty, that made the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and all that are in them;"* whereas, these writers thought that it was not *the Father*, properly speaking, but *the Son* that made them. The established language of this creed these fathers were not at liberty to alter; and it was very awkwardly that they accommodated it to their new

* *Prim. Cand.* p. 28.

notions. This author himself writes as if *he* had forgotten this article of his orthodox creed; for, through the whole of his pamphlet, he ascribes the *making of the world* not to Christ, but to the Father.* This is so much the voice of nature, and of the Scriptures, that I do not wonder that those who do not write professedly on the subject, should forget their peculiar system.

This writer says, "I would modestly and respectfully ask, what can be the reason that Dr. Priestley should put the issue of this important controversy on the testimony of the fathers, rather than on that of the inspired writers of the New Testament?"† If he will look into my other writings, he will find that I consider the great *strong-hold* of the *Unitarians* to be *the Scriptures*. It was the study of the Scriptures that made me an Unitarian; and I have said it must be that which will make others so. I would take the liberty to refer him to my "Appeal to the Professors of Christianity,"‡ the "Familiar Illustration of certain Passages of Scripture,"§ the "General View of Arguments," &c.‖ and the *Introduction* to my large History,¶ which I hope will soon be in his hands.

However, (if I may be indulged in a little allegory,) thinking myself in full possession of this *strong-hold* of my faith, I thought I could also seize upon a certain *out-work*, of some importance, in which the enemy had hitherto thought himself securely lodged. Accordingly I made a sally, and dislodged him. Attempts have been made to dispossess me of it, but hitherto they have been ineffectual. I am now strengthening the fortifications belonging to it; and here I am determined to stand a close and regular siege, conducted, I hope, by my present able opponent;** and, if I be compelled to surrender, I hope to acquit myself in such a manner, as to be entitled to leave it with all the honours of war. Still, however, I shall have my *strong-hold* to retire into.

I am not a little surprised that this learned and ingenious writer should need to be informed that, to ascertain the opinion of the Christian world in the age immediately following that of the apostles, cannot but be of great use in order to ascertain the opinion of the apostles themselves, and, consequently, the true sense of their writings. There may be many causes which, at this distance of time, may mislead us in our interpretation of their writings; but they must have been understood by those for whose use they were written, and who could have had recourse to the writers themselves to explain their meaning, if it had been doubtful.

* "May I not be allowed," says he, "to lay it down as the primary observation, that all *Christians, the Gnostics excepted*, by God the Father, who, in the New Testament, is made known as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, uniformly meant the God who made the world, who in every age governed it by his providence, and who condescended to be called *the God of Israel?* The most ancient formulary of Christian doctrine, which is called the *Apostles' Creed*, most expressly acknowledges this in the first article of it: 'I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.' And the authority of the Scriptures of the Old Testament in the Christian church cannot, on any other principle, be established." *Prim. Cand.* pp. 35, 36.

† *Ibid.* p. 47. ‡ Vol. II. pp. 383—404. § *Ibid.* pp. 430—480.

‖ *Supra*, pp. 513—516, 527—535. ¶ Vol. VI. pp. 13—52.

** Who, however, engaged no further in the controversy.

I have no doubt but that, if this writer himself could clearly prove, from independent evidence, that the common people among the early Christians, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, were such *Trinitarians* as he is, he would make no small account of the fact, as being nearly decisive in proof of the apostles having been Trinitarians, and that the doctrine of the Trinity is contained in their writings. I think that I can prove that the Christians of the early ages were Unitarians; and this is one reason, independent of my own interpretation of their writings, why I conclude that the apostles were so.

"Surely," says this writer, "it must be acknowledged, that the *divinity of Christ* is a doctrine which the sacred Scriptures *seem* to maintain; and Dr. Priestley himself will not wonder that a plain, unlettered Christian, who has borrowed but little light from philosophy, should imagine he reads it there."* So, I own, the case *did* appear to myself *formerly*. But as I read them *now*, the Scriptures do not seem to teach any such doctrine, but, in the plainest of all language, such as the most unlettered Christian must understand, they uniformly and emphatically teach the contrary doctrine, viz. that the Father is the only true God, and Christ the creature, the messenger, and the servant of that God.

Without entering particularly into the argument at present, I appeal to the general tenor of the Scriptures, in which *God* and *Christ* are constantly mentioned as beings, or persons, of a quite different *rank*, much more so than *man* and *beast*. They are never once confounded; and in no sense whatever, not even in the lowest of all, is Christ so much as called *God* in all the *New Testament*. I beg my candid antagonist only to read over the few following plain passages, and let him say, if he does not find great difficulty in accommodating them to his system. And these are only a very few of what I might have produced, as containing, in the plainest words, the same great doctrine.

Exod. xx. 3: "Thou shalt have no other God *besides* me." *Deut.* vi. 4: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord,"† which is called, (*Mark* xii. 29,) by our Saviour himself, "the first of all the commandments." 1 *Cor.* viii. 6: "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."‡ *Eph.* iv. 5, 6: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."§ 1 *Tim.* ii. 5: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."‖

With respect to that one text, which this writer selects,¶ as, no doubt, thinking it to be particularly favourable to his purpose, viz. 1 *John* v. 20: "And we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life:" I take the liberty to refer him to my "Illustration of certain Passages of Scripture,"** where he may learn that by the phrases, viz. *him that*

* *Prim. Cand.* p. 8. (*P.*)
† See Vol. XI. p. 274.
‡ See Vol. XIV. p. 80.
§ See *ibid.* p. 276.
‖ See *ibid.* pp. 126, 127.
¶ *Prim. Cand.* p. 11.
** Vol. II. p. 459. See XIV. p. 435.

is true, and *the true God*, we are to understand God the Father only, the same whom our Saviour himself expressly styles *the only true God*, when, in his solemn prayer, (*John* xvii. 3,) he said, "That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."* This alone should make us consider any interpretation of a passage which should make it say that there was *another true God*, as necessarily wrong, whatever other meaning should be put upon it. Supposing that in some part of the English *Old Testament* (in which the doctrine of the unity of God is so fully taught) it should be said that Moses was the true God; would any man, on that account, believe him to be so? He would immediately say that it must either be a wrong translation, that something else was intended besides what the words *seemed* to import, or that the passage was an interpolation.

If we be influenced by what only *seems* to be contained in the Scriptures, without using our reason in the interpretation of them, we may as well at once admit the doctrine of Transubstantiation; for nothing can be more directly taught in the *words* of scripture. Does not our Saviour himself say, (*Matt.* xxvi. 26,) "Take eat, this is my body;" and likewise, *vers.* 27, 28, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood"? Did he not also say, "in the synagogue" of *Capernaum*, [*John* vi. 53, 55,] "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.—He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him;" with much more to the same purpose? There is no maxim of criticism clearer than this, viz. that no man of common understanding could mean to say either what was manifestly absurd, or what should be a flat contradiction to what he had expressly and repeatedly asserted. Now, nothing can be more absurd than the doctrine of *three divine persons* making only *one God*; nor can any writers more expressly contradict themselves, than by first teaching the doctrine of *one God*, calling that God *the Father*, and even *the God and Father of Christ*, and then saying, that this Christ is himself God, equal to his own God and Father. If I could make no sense at all of any particular passages, that might be found in any of the sacred writings, I should say, without scruple, that this could not be their sense.

It is usual with zealous *Trinitarians* to alarm their hearers and readers with the *danger* of denying the divinity of Christ, and the *dread* they ought to entertain of disbelieving so great a truth, degrading their God and their Maker to the condition of a mortal man. But, on the contrary, on the supposition that the Father is *the only true God*, (which is clearly the doctrine of the Scriptures,) is there no danger in making and worshipping another God, and of exalting to this high rank a mere man like ourselves? Should we entertain no dread of infringing so great and fundamental a principle of revealed religion, as that of the *Divine Unity*; especially considering that the Scriptures abound with cautions, and the strongest admonitions on this subject; whereas it cannot be pretended that we are any where cautioned against not admitting the *divinity* of

* See Vol. XIII. pp. 332, 333.

Christ. There are numberless passages in the Scriptures, in which the one God, the Father, denounces the severest judgments against those who *give his glory to another*, but none in which Christ threatens any punishment to those who will not honour him as God.

Let the two cases, then, be calmly considered, and let not *Trinitarians* think their doctrine, if erroneous, a less dangerous one than ours; and let them be more careful how they pass their sentences of damnation upon those who, though they should be mistaken, are so in consequence of being concerned to maintain the unrivalled honour of the one true God, against any infringement of it, by *Heathens* or *Christians*; especially while their tempers and conduct are as exemplary as their own. The time is approaching which will shew who they are that are now contending for *truth*, and who for *error*, and also from what motives, and with what kind of spirit they engage in the controversy. It is with satisfaction that I look forward towards that time.

My candid antagonist asks, when "the system of gospel doctrine —has been reformed" according to my plan, "*what advantage* hath the Christian, and *what profit* is there of the gospel? Compared with *philosophy* it can boast but of little superiority; compared with *Judaism*, scarce any superiority at all."* But I would ask him, in my turn, is there no advantage in the certain knowledge of a *resurrection* and of a *state of retribution* to come, which is the only great and powerful sanction of virtue, and which alone can enable a man to bear the trials of life, and to die with hope and joy?

By what standard of value and worth must that man judge, who can say, that this consideration weighs nothing, and such doctrines as the *Trinity* and *Atonement* weigh much? Let us judge of principles as our Saviour teaches us to judge of *men*, viz. *by their fruits*. Now what fruits are the mysterious doctrines which this writer rates so high, in their nature, *capable* of producing, compared with those of that one great doctrine which he seems to have overlooked?

An experienced physician, considering the ingredients of an approved family medicine, will easily distinguish those drugs that are operative from those that are insignificant, or that counteract the effects of the rest. Now let a man who only understands human nature, examine my creed, and that of my antagonist, admitting that we both of us live as becomes Christians, and have some common principles that assist us in doing so. Is it the doctrine of *three persons in one* God, or the belief of one simple, intelligent Being, the maker and governor of all things? Is it the doctrine of *Atonement*, which supposes that God never forgives any sin till a full satisfaction has been made to his offended justice, (a dangerous pattern for man to follow,) or the belief that he requires no satisfaction at all besides repentance on the part of the offender? Which of these doctrines is naturally better calculated to ensure our love, reverence, and obedience to God? My own opinion is known, and therefore also what I must suppose an impartial judge would determine in the case. But still these are small ingredients in the *medi-*

* *Prim. Cand.* pp. 48, 49. (*P.*)

cine that I am speaking of. The great and effective one is the firm belief of a future life, which is common to us both.

Did Christians attend more to the consideration of that *life and immortality which is brought to light by the gospel*, the knowledge of which it has extended to all mankind, we should make less account of all other matters. Agreeing in the belief and expectation of a resurrection and a future immortal life, we agree in every thing that is of real efficacy to elevate the mind, to warm the heart, and to reform the life. This is that one noble *tree of life*, which has been too long concealed by timber of an ignoble kind, with which it has been crowded, and which I wish to lend a hand to extirpate and remove. And (to use a comparison similar to a very fine one made use of by a writer in the *Theological Repository*) if, in my zeal to clear away these incumbrances, I should happen to touch the bark of the tree itself, I hope it will be forgiven me. My meaning was good, and the blow was honestly directed to favour the tree, and make it appear to proper advantage.

No. XV.

AN ADDITION TO THE LETTERS RELATING TO Mr. HOWES.

(See *supra*, p. 562.)

On expressing my surprise that Mr. Howes should ascribe the *Extracts from Theodotus* in *Clemens Alexandrinus* to Theodotus the Tanner, (by which means he makes one of the ancient Unitarians a believer in the pre-existence, and, as he also thought, in the divinity of Christ,) he said,* "In regard to Theodotus, this will be discussed afterwards," and as I had observed,† that the learned editors of Clemens Alexandrinus, viz. Sylburgius and Potter, were not of his opinion, he adds, "At present I shall only observe, that if modern authority were capable to decide the question, I can produce as good authority on my side, that of Cave and M. Simon; but I form my judgment from internal evidence in those extracts themselves."

As Mr. Howes, in his last publication, has said nothing on this subject, though, according to the arrangement of his materials, I think he ought to have done it, I shall content myself with giving an extract from Dr. Lardner's account of the different persons of the name of *Theodotus* in his *History of Heretics*.

"First, a Valentinian. Cave, in his account of Theodotus the Tanner, ascribes to him all the opinions which he has collected out of the oriental doctrine, subjoined to the works of Clement of Alexandria. But that is confounding things as different and opposite as can well be. Theodotus the Tanner is reckoned among those who did not allow Jesus to have existed before his nativity of Mary, which is very different from the sentiments represented by Cave from the above-named work. And yet Fabricius seems to have been of the same opinion with Cave. Tillemont perceived that the Theodotus

* In his former publication, p. 13. (*P.*)

† *Supra*, p. 563.

mentioned in these extracts, was a Valentinian. Beausobre had no doubt of it, and says he flourished about the year of our Lord, 130." *

I quote Dr. Lardner, because Mr. Howes seems to have some respect for his judgment and impartiality. In his last publication he says, (p. 44,) "It may be observed as truly wonderful, that Dr. Lardner, if inclined to Unitarianism, should have left no accounts behind him of the Ebionites, Nazarenes, or Elcesaites. One should have thought that those pretended founders of his own system would have been the first to claim his attention. I cannot, then, but suspect that they have been suppressed, because they proved too plainly the belief of the Ebionites in the divinity of Christ. For Lardner was of too inquisitive and too rational a turn of mind, to have thus neglected altogether the important heresies of the first centuries, while he treated minutely of several inconsiderable ones; and he was apparently too honest to have misled his readers with respect to the real tenets of the Ebionites and Nazarenes. *Hinc ille hiatus.* This is the more strange, because he does give some account of those sects in his other works, but nothing any way favourable to their being the founders of Humanism."

What Dr. Lardner would have done if he had lived to have published his own work, no man can tell. That he considered the doctrine of the *Nazarenes* as no proper *heresy*, and yet totally different from that of the *Trinitarians* or *Arians*, is evident from his four *posthumous discourses*, in which, after treating of these two schemes, he considers and recommends "the doctrine of the Unitarians or the Nazareans;" † his account of which corresponds exactly to what is commonly called *Socinianism*, of which it is well known that he was a *zealous* advocate, as Dr. Price observes.‡ Let Mr. Howes read his *Letters on the Logos*, which led me to adopt his opinion. But I should not much wonder if Mr. Howes should hereafter express some doubt of *my* being an *Unitarian*. Indeed, of the two, it appears to me quite as easy to prove that there are no Unitarians at present, as that there were none in the primitive ages of Christianity.

* *Hist. of Heretics*, p. 370. *(P.)* Lardner's *Works*, IX. p. 471.
† *Ibid*, X. p. 619. ‡ In his *Appendix*, p. 393. *(P.)*

END OF VOLUME XVIII.

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